KASIBAHAGUA MEETS SASSUMA ARNAA:

TRUANCY, RESILIENCE AND INDIGENOUS CURRICULA

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By

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Abstract

This non-empirical thesis employed standpoint theory to explore how culturally relevant curricula and curricular resources aim to foster resilience while diminishing truancy among First Nations, Métis, and Inuit youths. First Nations, Métis, and Inuit curricula and curricular resources were explored for their potentials for undoing the negative repercussions that may come from using Western curricula formulations and processes. Based on my analysis, I concluded that teacher education programs can better equip educators educating Indigenous youths by utilizing curricula and curricular resources, built upon the premises of Indigenous paradigms, training infused with culturally relevant knowledge, and increased community involvement. Addressing such factors may aid in birthing resilience and reducing truancy.

Key words: First Nations, Métis, and Inuit youth, Inuit youth, Taíno, Indigenous, Aboriginal, First Nations, Métis and Inuit curriculum, First Nations, Métis, and Inuit curricular resources, teacher education, resilience, truancy

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Dedication

To my daughter Kymberley, to my husband Bo, and to Kevin; for sustaining me through all our adventures, with all your strength, your love and unlimited hugs, and for believing in me.

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Gracias

Tak

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Table of Contents

List of Tables

List of Figures

Chapter One: Positionality

"Mabrika" (welcome in Taíno). I am a Taíno (Arawak) woman from Puerto Rico. It means that in addition to my sustaining Taíno life force, the blood of my African slave and Spanish colonial ancestors runs through my veins. As I begin to discuss my journey and work, I wanted first to clarify that to honour the spirit of inclusion, I have written using gender-neutral pronouns.

I was born in Puerto Rico to Puerto Rican parents as the first and only child. My early childhood years were infused with a deep adoration for my island and our culture, which at times translated into what I, at the time, failed to understand as solid political activism, fighting for the independence of Puerto Rico. I was five years old when I stood at the commencement of a political rally, flags swaying all around, and fearlessly faced a crowd while I sang the revolutionary version of the National Anthem of Puerto Rico; not the one in which Christopher Columbus is in awe of the beauty of our island of Borikén (its Taíno name); but rather, the one urging Puerto Ricans to wake up because it is time to fight colonialism. The anthem is known as "La Borinqueña" (Vézina, 2017). I believe part of the reason for my parents' fervent engagement was that my father had been in Vietnam with the U.S. military before I was born.

Despite the growing interest at the time in embracing American culture in Puerto Rico, my parents raised me to love our culture and our island. My mother was the only one of her four siblings to obtain a university degree (in psychology), so she raised me with a profound love of learning for learning's sake, as well as the belief that we should use knowledge to help revitalize our Puerto Rican communities. From my father, I learned to love being out in nature and never fear it but always respect it. I remember how the times when we would hike in El Yunque, the

rainforest in Puerto Rico, and bathe in the waterfalls, would nourish my spirit beyond much else. From my grandmother, I learned to speak my mind and let my voice be heard because it had value. From my grandfather, who in his lifetime published three books on spiritual poetry (Rohena Garay, 1975). He instilled in me a love of writing that dwells ardently in my heart to this day. I was raised to be proud of my heritage, and I am forever grateful for this rootedness because it carries me, even now, as I write these words thousands of miles away from Borikén.

By the time I was ten years old, it was 1981 and the economy in Puerto Rico was in dire straits. The rampant unemployment impacted my family as well. Severe alcohol problems developed in my family, and several members met their untimely death because of it. Faced with the prospect of staying on the island and living on food stamps, to my surprise, my father rejoined the military, and we moved to Germany, leaving Puerto Rico, all our extended family, and everything I had ever known.

To say I spent the first two years in Germany in complete culture shock would be an understatement. I attended a school for military dependants that was unlike anything I had ever seen. Reciting the Pledge of Allegiance every morning and getting to know children who came from just about every walk of life and every corner of the U.S. left me feeling like a doe who had wandered into oncoming traffic.

My refuge was my family. I came home every day, and the love and strength from my parents refilled my empty cup drained by confusion from the sudden English submersion. The frustration I felt by not communicating well with others was unfathomable. The school advised my parents to immediately cease communicating with me in Spanish and embrace speaking English at home to assimilate into the American school system provided in Germany fully. Thankfully, my parents were not fazed by the school administration and were quick to reiterate

that it was their parental responsibility to ensure that I never forgot my Spanish language, just as it was the school's responsibility to ensure I learned English as well as possible. Within two years of arriving in Germany and being placed in special education classes, I bid my classroom peers farewell to meet my Honours English peers.

The feeling of pride toward my parents for defending the right to my identity has always stayed with me. The feeling of cultural loss brought on by being replanted in Europe has driven my desire to be an ally to those faced with a sense of detachment, and in particular, of not belonging. I remember a group of siblings who arrived at my school, and they too were from Puerto Rico. It was exhilarating to communicate with kids who were in a similar situation. Their parents, too, were advised to speak English at home to facilitate easier assimilation. Unfortunately, their family did conform to this advice, resulting in their inability to master either language.

This feeling of being lost in a different culture marked a turning point in my life. Because I could rely on the strength my family provided, I learned to embrace change and see it as a challenge not to be feared. I learned to accept and welcome people who were different from me. I learned the importance of knowing what different cultures honour and value and that I should respect others' perspectives because we all have our own storied lives and experiences. When most of my elementary school classmates were making friends with their fellow American peers from the Department of Defense school, I became best friends with a German girl from the community where I lived in Aschaffenburg. She opened her heart and home and showed me many things about her culture that I would never have learned otherwise. Now almost forty years later, we remain good friends. She taught me a lot of German, which made a big difference in how I was treated in the community. From her, I learned the importance of learning to

communicate in the native language of the community where you live—rather than expecting others to speak your language.

I earned my Associate Degree at the University of Maryland at their overseas campus in Munich. Again, most young people were the sons and daughters of U.S. military personnel. My studies there took place during the First Gulf War. Our campus was inside a military base, but the dorms were not. Most of us had one, if not both parents, in the Middle East, and at times, we had armed military police in front of the dorms. We had to make sure we scheduled enough time to go through the security checkpoint and have our backpacks inspected before we were allowed on base. Doing well in school was critical, but it was not easy to concentrate when we lived with all this uncertainty and not knowing if our parents were okay. As an adult now, I can reflect on youths who flee their homes due to wars and conflicts and try to make a life somewhere else-youths who work hard to focus on academics while thinking of their families elsewhere. We never know what things besides academics occupy our students' minds.

After my time in Munich, I went to the University of Alaska (U.A.F), Fairbanks, to continue my education. Although I majored in psychology, I worked as a grant coordinator at U.A.F.'s School of Education. I worked for Dr. Jerry Lipka and his grant on ethnomathematics. The grant work provided my first exposure to Indigenous ways of learning. I worked with Dr. Lipka coordinating a project involving Elders and their work with him throughout Alaska, with Elders in Yakutsk in east Siberia, and with NASA's Jet Propulsion Labs. It was fascinating work. For the first time, I realized the primarily one-size-fits-all education I had had up to this point did not have to be this way—that you could bring lessons on beading, for instance, into math class to awaken an interest in individuals. Caring and connecting with your students is vital, and having

your students learn in a culturally relevant manner was, and still is, in my mind, tremendously rewarding.

Many years later, as an adult and a parent, I would reap the rewards of this lesson when I moved to Switzerland with my husband and child. We made it a point to enroll our daughter in the local village school and got to know the other parents in our community. This period resonated with my childhood because there was an international community in the area, and their children attended the international school. I met some of the international community members, and they warned me about the "cold, uninviting Swiss" and how they kept their distance. Such a scenario was not our reality; not when our next-door neighbour gathered fellow neighbours to welcome us to the village with cake and coffee; not when my daughter walked with her best friend—the girl next door—to the local school on her first day of kindergarten and subsequently for many years; and absolutely not when my daughter wandered off after school one day, and the neighbours rallied and went out into the village shouting her name and looking everywhere until we found her. I believe the difference between this interaction and that of some of my international peers was my willingness to speak the language, to be an active part of the community, my readiness to show an interest in the values and culture of the people there, and to have my child receive her education at the local school and learn local values.

It has not always been easy to try to fit in, no matter how hard I tried. I have lived in Denmark twice in my life, and while I love my extended family from my Danish husband's side, who have always supported me and embraced me with open arms, the open reception I received by my family did not often extend into the public sphere. On both occasions when I lived there, I was never invited to interview for jobs to which I applied despite my university degree. I was on several occasions treated as less than worthy because of my looks, only to notice a change in

attitude when people realized “oh, you are not from Turkey” or “oh, you are not Middle Eastern.” Such experiences frustrated me on behalf of everyone who has faced racial discrimination. In Denmark I was the only one pulled aside for a closer inspection on a flight full of light-skinned passengers. I have enough understanding of the world to know better than to generalize. There are welcoming and inhospitable people all around the world, and I know and am friends with many amazing people from Denmark who have become lifelong friends. Secure in this knowledge, the treatment did not rattle my inner strength. My resilience carried me through these episodes, and I am fully aware that these events pale by comparison to some experienced by others. It made me think of those who lack the resilience and structural support to overcome such vitriol, and of those who are broken by it rather than empowered for having persevered. It made me believe that as racism persists, there must be an ongoing need to find ways to educate people to reduce its occurrence.

Leaving Denmark for Greenland marked another point in my life that was life-altering. The first time I lived in Greenland, my in-laws and brothers-in-law still lived there. I was twenty-five, and it was the first time since my childhood move to Germany when I felt that I had limited communication abilities once again. My husband was fresh out of college and trying to make a name for himself in his career, so he was sent abroad quite often, which meant that the only people I knew were his family in town. I clung to them desperately, and they vowed that now that I lived there, they were done speaking English, and from then on, everything would be in Danish in their home. At first, I thought it was a joke, but soon I realized they were serious. This experience was at a time before Facebook, or Skype, or Facetime. I was desperate for communication and spent six months in tears and feeling sorry for myself. After that, I decided to stop crying and get busy learning. I devoted all my time and energy to learning Danish.

Because they were the only people I socialized with, I did not work on learning kalaallisut (an Inuit dialect, likewise referred to as West Greenlandic- one of the Indigenous dialects in Greenland) at the time. Eventually, I got a job teaching adult education, and I was teaching English and Spanish to Greenlandic youths, something which I enjoyed very much. The youths learned quickly and praised me for not being one of the teachers who reverted to Danish any time an explanation was necessary because that was a complex language for them too. I was teaching in the same way I was learning, from being at the deep end. This experience gave me insights into how people coming from small, primarily Indigenous communities might feel at the prospect of being expected to speak the language of those who have colonized the land, if they want to succeed in education and the workforce.

The second time we moved to Greenland was quite different. I had mastered Danish and was determined to focus on being a teacher who advocated for her students. I began, through trial and error, making curricular changes in relation to what I perceived my students needed to succeed. In many ways, these small-scale, grounded attempts served as the foundation for the theorizing that I do in this thesis. On the first day of classes at Qeqqani Ilinniarnertunngorniarfik / The Highschool of Central Greenland (GUX Nuuk), I always told my students that they were not equal and that I would not treat them identical. I would say to them that they were all unique individuals with individual needs and would dedicate a portion of the first day or two to conducting interviews with each one to learn how I would serve each one best in the coming school year. I would find out about their background. I heard things such as how some were sixteen years old and had just left the home village and all family to come to Nuuk for an education; that they grew up in Nuuk and all their family lived in town; that they did not know anyone in the city and that it was tough being alone; that it was tough living in Nuuk, where

everyone knew you; that they were diagnosed with clinical depression; that they wanted to go to medical school; that they were deaf; that they were elite athletes representing Greenland; that they were teenage single parents; that they were the first in their family to seek further education; that their parents were doctors and journalists; and most of all I heard how each wanted to complete his/her education. I truly sensed as Pratt and Danyluk (2017) indicated, that "[t]he deficit is not in the students but rather in the lack of Indigenous knowledge of the teachers" (p.21). Revelations in their stories about themselves from the beginning helped me adjust my teaching to help all my students as equitably as I could.

This was the first time I taught psychology and study methodology courses solely in Danish. It was a daunting task that I took on as a challenge. Being sympathetic to students learning a subject through a language that was not, for the majority, their Inuit mother tongue; I created a learning environment that acknowledged this challenge and accommodated it. I would focus on having the students become familiar with the terminology each would need to express their newfound knowledge. I would employ the assistance of the most academically strong individuals sometimes to explain things in kalaallisut. I would show that I trusted them to engage in conversations in kalaallisut to discuss, at times, complex concepts. I explained that I fully understood how difficult it could be to convey something in another language other than your mother tongue and that I was prepared to help overcome the problem. Sometimes I would be questioned by colleagues as to whether youths indeed were spending time discussing the assigned topic. The subsequent conversations with individuals in my classrooms would prove that the discussions did pertain to the assigned topics time and time again. The academic praise many earned at the oral exams at the end of the year would prove that trust and mutual respect can yield plenty of success.

Working at the school, I had daily interactions with many non-Inuit educators just starting their teaching careers. In my work, I reflect on my lived experience of interactions and discussions about teaching methods, concerns, lesson plans, and pedagogical approaches with youths in the classroom environment. I felt that the young, non-Inuit educators were enthusiastic about teaching and were eager to do their best. Many tended to have long-term plans about using their upcoming certifications as stepping-stones to return to Denmark to get good teaching jobs at academic high schools (gymnasiums) there.

When our talks turned to the curriculum, I heard a lot of frustration over the lack of interest many youths expressed to them about what they were being taught; "Why do I need to know this?"; "What am I going to use this for?" Non-Indigenous students in Western schooling posing such questions may more easily connect to their history and values. Some teachers would get frustrated about individuals taking too long to complete assignments or switching to kalaallisut to speak to peers; however, these particular educators had apparently not reflected on the fact that many individuals had to wrap their heads around concepts that were pertinent to the subject he/she was learning; concepts which were brand new to his/her repertoire of vocabulary. Many needed a reminder that you could not compare a youth from Denmark, who was learning a subject in the only language they had ever spoken; to that of a youth from Greenland, who is learning from a kalaallisut (West Greenlandic) background and may have been having their first taste of an academic environment being primarily run in Danish. The need to prioritize a period of language acquisition was an ongoing discussion. The ideas of how language, culture, curriculum and its intended learning outcomes, the students' perception of the curriculum vis-à-vis their own expectations and goals slowly began to plant the seeds in my mind that would inspire this work.

The school was quite generous about providing kalaallisut language courses, at no cost, to educators. Courses were offered weekly, and the school went so far as to provide the requisite books at no cost. I saw these courses as an opportunity to increase empathy within educators. It was an excellent way for us to put ourselves in our students' shoes. Most of them spoke kalaallisut as their mother tongue, while others spoke tunumiit oraasiat (East Greenlandic) and some spoke avanersuarmiutut (Inuktut-spoken in northernmost Greenland). Each youth was expected to succeed in Danish. While some teachers signed up for the free classes, most did not. Of those that signed up, many gave up for a multitude of reasons, among which was the difficulty and time one needed to invest in order to learn the language.

My reflection on this underutilized gift was- why is this optional? I felt, and still feel, that securing this opportunity for understanding between the student body and educators is too important to leave to chance. In my mind, it is our responsibility as educators to do all we can to establish that connection. Why is the expectation that youth is to make all the effort to communicate? Why should youths be treated as a subaltern, and we, as educators, be the ones holding all the power? The time for that mindset has passed, and it is time we show it. I argue we can show a readiness to form better connections by examining how and why educators should consider cultural relevance in curricula.

Another factor that I witnessed and felt to be a case of class dissimilarity was the ongoing discussion of allowing students to eat in class. Many youngsters at GUX Nuuk have experienced food insecurity. I have heard complaints about hunger, and because of the food insecurity, it meant that many held part-time jobs, sometimes multiple jobs. Some teachers, perhaps having never experienced food insecurity since the majority came from food-secure Denmark, would be quite adamant about forbidding eating in class. The school established a valuable program that

provided a free oatmeal breakfast; however, many youths did not eat it simply because they were not allowed to consume it in class. Not everyone had the possibility of getting to school early enough to eat prior to class. I discussed with my peers whether they wanted persons who were well-nourished and therefore receptive to learning; or individuals who could not concentrate on the lesson simply because they were daydreaming about food. Food consumption during lessons was never a point of contention in my classes, nor was this the case with some of my more 'progressive' colleagues. The youths knew they could eat their food as long as they paid attention and cleaned up after themselves to show respect for those who would be in that classroom after them. The youngsters appreciated being seen as people with human needs above being seen as students. It has been my experience that each showed gratitude by becoming a more engaged student. I have seen plenty of youths not sitting in class when they should have been, simply because the teacher did not allow eating in class, and they chose to be truant in order to sit outside and satisfy their hunger instead.

Everyone faces personal challenges of some sort and severity in their lives, but not all problems can be fully addressed by teachers. Still, it helped to remember that of the 500 high school students who attend school in Nuuk, many were on their own, away from home, and away from home villages and immediate family for the first time. Many expressed a desire for social connection that extended beyond their academic context. On any given day, you could look out from some of the school buildings and see whales swimming around in the ocean or icebergs floating by. These may distract enough for the young ones to want to be outside rather than in a classroom. While some of my colleagues complained that youths wanted to be outside and would not concentrate in the classroom, I proposed that taking them out on the land might help in helping them feel grounded in ways that would actually enhance their ability to concentrate and

focus on school subjects, rather than undermine their academics. School went from 8:00 a.m. to 4:30 p.m. That was, and still is, a long time to be sitting day in and day out. Many lessons could be learned that could be better absorbed out in nature, or at other culturally relevant sites. Stepping away from the colonial mindset and the confines of the four walls of a classroom opened up the possibility for exploring infinite landscapes for learning (Middlemiss, 2018). This experience prompted me to consider: Is land-based education an answer to making youths stay in school? I think to an extent it could be, but perhaps not quite the full answer (Seawright, 2014).

Looking back, one of the groups that impacted me the most, was my first group of science students. When they started, there were 28 individuals attending, and three years later, only eight graduated. I could do everything I possibly could day after day to motivate and empower each youth. I could take them to the ocean; I could take them up a mountain; however, one person cannot do it alone at the end of the day. With this thesis I suggest it takes a community to work with every one of us, and for each of us to collaborate with said community. I have worked with dedicated colleagues who did their best to help youths connect to more than just our classes, who were willing to work with parents and our extended network to make sure the youths felt supported, but it takes a network with this mindset to make it work effectively. At GUX Nuuk, many who enroll are still first-generation students, so it is essential to demystify and decolonize education so that graduation feels attainable, relevant, and promotes and serves the community. Each should want to attend all his/her classes, not just a select few. This thesis offers a vision of how this might be possible.

As a teacher, it was rewarding to know that when a high school student graduated and their journey with me ended, I knew I had done my best to help them see the strength each possessed. Now that I live here in Canada and have further enriched my knowledge up to this

point on Indigenous pedagogy and on First Nations, Métis, and Inuit resources, I realize there was more I could have done and that there is much more that educators can do to empower Indigenous youths. This thesis shows that educating teachers on using curricula promoting Indigenous ways of knowing offers answers as to how each can empower Indigenous youths. Thanks to my lived experiences, I suggest that to reduce truancy, part of this is journey involves educating teachers on First Nations, Métis, and Inuit ways of knowing to teach from a culturally relevant and culturally considerate perspective.

Indigenous identities can no longer be swept under a rug of convenience in an edifice of colonialism. When I look in the mirror, I see the resilience of my Taíno ancestors, and this in itself propels my motivation to embark on this research journey:

> With regard to Indigenous Peoples of the Western Hemisphere, it is well-established that the "expectation of extinction" dominated the overall contemplation of the first century of American anthropological discourse… Taíno affirmation and re-tribalization efforts in the 21st century are no less than a remarkable testament to the strength and veracity of the diverse communities of Taíno consciousness. While the denial of existence or claims of illegitimacy remain generally consistent responses by sectors of government and academia, the advances in information and communications technologies (ICTs) has facilitated greater accessibility to grassroots and scholarly documentation of Taíno affirmation… Among all these diverse groups... however, is an overarching unified position affirming a living Taíno People, culture, and heritage. (Borrero, 2013, p.6)

I believe that the inspiration to persevere day after day is born from a sense of belonging. The greater the sense of belonging, the greater the likelihood will be to engage in learning. When a youth shows up to learn, each one is showing up to be the architect of his or her own,

indomitable future. That is the dream we have the power to craft into a reality. With that sense of belonging in mind, I have reflected on my own Taíno identity and the near six years teaching Inuit youths in Nuuk, and what I found enticed me to analyze First Nations, Métis, and Inuit resources to see how the curricular material engenders Indigenous youth empowerment. It was essential to honour both of my life journeys, and I sought to convey this in my opening chapter. A portion of my thesis title is named "Kasibahagua meets Sassuma Arnaa." In the language of the Taíno, Kasibahagua means, "The black-holed stone" and it represents the womb of Atabeira-the Earth Mother" (Kasibahagua Taíno Cultural Society, 2021). Sassuma Arnaa, according to Greenlandic oral traditions, represents the Lady of the Sea. "Every Greenlandic kid …heard this story once or twice when they were children. It has a clear and an important message to it. We should respect the land we live in and be more aware of what could happen if we keep polluting our surroundings" (Dorph, 2019). I saw a natural connection between the womb of the Earth Mother and the Lady of the Sea. As I tried to create work that was focused and honoured my life experiences and how I make the connections across cultures through the mentioned deities, I reflected on the journey that brought me here to do my graduate work. My rich life journey may have caused some to think that my mind is scattered, but rather, it is simply my life journey. My thesis writing is proof that the lessons I shared I took into my heart and learned profoundly from each location. Each experience has keenly sharpened and indeed shaped my commitment to this work. I hope that these experiences will help contribute, to some small degree, to shaping a perspective of greater understanding toward each other and respect for the journeys that helped our paths cross in this time and space. The next chapter, then, outlines the research questions inspired by my experience.

Chapter Two: Research Questions

The previous chapter detailed my positionality, and with that as context, I will now address my research questions and how these came about.

Kasibahagua

My Taíno ancestors honour Kasibahagua as the womb of Atabey (the earth mother). Atabey manifests in three ways; therefore, Kasibahagua as the womb of Atabey, is in my mind, the womb that can give birth to possibilities for action, regardless of whether she manifests as

- nurturer (Atabey)- Metaphor for epistemology
- as love (Caguana)- Metaphor for axiology
- or as the disrupting hurricane (Guabancex)- Metaphor for methodology

I envisioned Atabey nurturing our understanding of knowledge as roots growing from an amalgamation of seeds. The seeds are all points from scholars that argue the importance of the Indigenous perspective.

Approaching the analysis with Caguana ensures that the actions are being done in good faith, taking an ethically sound approach. The seeds planted with scholarly research argue for the importance of ethical practices that reflect a move toward increased equity in education.

Guabancex calls for disrupting hegemonic and binary Western knowledge systems entrenched in education.

I want to argue that Kasibahagua's fertile womb has birthed many perspectives in my work. To embrace Guabancex as a metaphor for methodology disrupted the expectations and cleared the path to make room for the growth that needs to occur. Caguana's spirit of love was the axiology that could ensure a sense of trust in research and confidence in the educators trying to enact change. The nurturer as epistemology could ensure that it will carry on from generations

past, for generations to come. When casting our eyes toward ontology when working from an Indigenous perspective in academia, there are certain aspects to consider such as the ones raised by Altmann (2014):

> I think that it is hard if not impossible to define something such as an indigenous ontology. If you go for what (Western) ontology is about, you will have to struggle with … indigenous cosmovision. That cosmovision does not allow a differentiation into the sub-disciplines that Western philosophy has, given that one of its bases is usually the interconnectedness of everything. So, ontology is a Western concept that cannot be applied as such to other systems of thinking. Nevertheless, you can interpret that totale of indigenous cosmovision (of course, always the cosmovision of a given people or ethnic group) following the question "what is, what exists?" (para. 2)

Atabey as a holistic metaphor for ontology is what protects everything within her, with her all-encompassing power, which disrupted the Western hegemony and revealed a world view that embraces there were choices out there for the making and the taking and that the assumptions made by the status quo no longer have to be the norm. That assimilation is not the answer.

Sassuma Arnaa

My lived experience with Inuit youths in Greenland motivated me to choose Sassuma Arnaa. In my mind, Kasibahagua calls for a particular set of actions, while Sassuma Arnaa calls for us to be mindful of the mind, body, and soul/name and spirit, not just our own, but that of the sentient beings around us. I support this with standpoint theory through scholarly findings, including Jessen Williamson's (2011) framework of "timikkut," "tarnikkut," anersaakkullu." I argue that just as Sassuma Arnaa retracts her bounty when it is not looked after by man (Jessen

Williamson, 2021, personal communication), we must be mindful of taking the necessary courses of action toward a paradigm shift to ensure we are respectfully looking after this bounty; the mind, body, and soul of the Indigenous youths being shaped by the education system. My argument is that the binary system is not enough to sustain or meet the needs of Indigenous youths. I have woven the aforementioned triadic framework into the writing.

Formulation

This chapter is a follow-up on how I intend to satisfy my curiosity with the above. The following are research questions I formulated to explore how teacher education can better equip non-Indigenous educators by utilizing First Nations, Métis, and Inuit curricula and curricular resources. The documents and resources are each in their unique way, built upon the premises of Indigenous paradigms, and teacher training is infused with culturally relevant knowledge and increased community involvement. These were the essential qualifications in my selection process, not looking for the latest curricular documents, but rather looking for those best addressing Indigenous knowledge. In my mind, addressing such factors may aid in birthing educational resilience, reducing truancy. Therefore, after reflecting on my ancestors, studies, and lived experience as an educator, I looked at my first chapter and said curriculum documents and resources. The following are the questions thus formulated for my research.

Principal question

- How can elements found within the framework of extant First Nations, Métis, and Inuit curricula and curricular resources presented be used to help educators explore potentials for fostering resilient First Nations, Métis, and Inuit youths; and reduce truancy in the process?

Underlying questions

- What is standpoint theory, and how can it be applied to explore how culturally relevant curricula and curricular resources aim to foster resilience among First Nations, Métis, and Inuit youths?
- How can Kasibahagua meet Sassuma Arnaa?

Context for conducting this research

- As an Indigenous educator who has navigated through the colonial mindset of binary Western knowledge systems and who has interacted with new, non-Indigenous teachers, how can I contribute insight to non-Indigenous teachers responsible for educating Indigenous youths?
- How can I, as an educator of Indigenous youths, who has learned the potential of decolonizing education and of applying Indigenous knowledge systems, convey this?

Goal of research

- To provide current insight to Indigenous youths' educators as to why it is imperative to educate with a decolonizing lens if we are to kindle a tangible paradigm shift toward Indigeneity in education, which will foster resilience while reducing truancy.

Implication to knowledge

- I hope this work will promote increased use of Indigenous curricula and curricular resources. Such a change could positively impact how educators perceive and educate Indigenous youths and how they relate to the land and communities. Additionally, it may positively affect how all youth relate to educators, to each other and nature.

- Another implication is that training infused with culturally relevant knowledge and increased community involvement could shift the preconceptions formed by some educators of how knowledge is dispensed and received. It can broaden the scope of where knowledge is acquired and expand the scope of which knowledge is valued; thus, prompting educators to reflect and act on what they teach and how they carry this out.

Educators can hopefully gain insight into another reality. Lugones (1987) said it best when she declared:

> The reason why I think that travelling to someone's "world" is a way of identifying with them is because by travelling to their "world" we can understand what it is to be them and what it is to be ourselves in their eyes. Only when we have travelled to each other's "worlds" are we fully subjects to each other. (p.17)

Process of analysis

- To analyze my work, I intend to reflect on whether I have addressed my principal and underlying questions through the deities discussed. I believe we, as educators, all can explore what connections we can make from our own experiences and find inspiration from our own storied lives. I will reflect on whether I supported my methodology with academic research. I will consider whether I sustained my analysis of the curricula and curricular resources with my lived experiences as an educator, with Indigenous ways of knowing and standpoint theory. Finally, I will reflect on whether I teased out the importance of all the examples presented to highlight the potential of building resilience and reducing truancy.

I hope this section has provided greater clarity regarding the research questions, the factors that brought it to this point, and what I hope will drive it forward. I have reflected on how I intend to analyze my work. I will now examine the literature review I conducted to support my questions and the study of the curricula and curricular resources.

Chapter Three: Literature Review

Overview

Having explored some aspects of my positionality, this chapter will address the literature review in which standpoint theory is examined, including other general theoretical influences and methodological approaches. The chapter highlights the key themes and trends pertinent to my subject, truancy. I look critically at current research on truancy and address common assumptions. I examine the significance of resilience which in my mind will significantly reduce truancy. I identified the gaps in existing literature, and I argued for filling the gaps. But first, let us look at my analysis of the standpoint theory, beginning with the feminist contribution.

Standpoint Theory

Standpoint theory is defined as

> a feminist theoretical perspective that argues that knowledge stems from social position. The perspective denies that traditional science is objective and suggests that research and theory have ignored and marginalized women and feminist ways of thinking. The theory emerged from the Marxist argument that people from an oppressed class have special access to knowledge that is not available to those from a privileged class. (Borland, 2020, para. 1)

Intemann (2019) explained how feminist standpoint theory emerged from a need to understand how knowledge is shaped beyond the structures of hierarchy; and how feminist theory contributed notably to understanding systems such as capitalism and their direct association with the patriarchy. Marxist feminists in the 1970s were credited with challenging the status quo. Harding (2009) supported this claim by adding that "it was initially formulated as a methodology intended to explain how effective feminist research had been, and should be,

organized, first in sociology and then in political philosophy and biology" (p. 193), and that it "is widely used in research projects focused on race, class, sexuality, and studies in postcolonial research" (p. 193).

The above is finely woven into my analysis as feminist theory on standpoint theory intersects the Taíno and the Indigenous relationships to the land. In my mind, my background provides a lens through the eyes of the deities that guide my work, allowing me to observe some postcolonial junctions sharply and see the consequential challenges these present to First Nations, Métis, and Inuit youths as they navigate through education systems. According to Foley (2003), "Feminist standpoint is the evolutionary base of Indigenous standpoint, as it refers to a position in society that provides a way to make sense of what is affected by the dominant discourse and society in general" (p. 45). It is, then, essential that we as educators examine the reality of Indigenous youths through their Indigenous eyes.

Further to Foley (2003), Moreton-Robinson (2013) addressed the connection Indigenous people have to their ancestors, their blood, and how the link is at the heart of "Indigenous sovereignty, which informs our standpoint as embodied socio-cultural and historically situated subjects of knowledge" (p. 335), and this leads me to ask: "To what extent could First Nations, Métis, and Inuit youth resilience be promoted if curricula were far more focused on the social, cultural and historical aspects of their lives, as is the case in the First Nations, Métis, and Inuit curricular resources I examined?"

Recent global movements support the increasing determination to steer toward a new destination. As cited by Medina-Minton (2018), "Standpoint theory progressed from this theory-based perspective to one that explores the communication between groups, the behaviors that manifest among the different group members due to their power locations, and the societal

position that different groups occupy" (p. 440). Medina-Minton's argument indicated to me the direction of my analysis, which aimed to bridge the gap between First Nations, Métis, and Inuit youths and the educators with whom they interact. I saw standpoint theory as a potential tool to fill this chasm with First Nations, Métis, and Inuit knowledge in schools here in Canada and elsewhere, where the education system is primarily based on Western thought.

The Importance of Standpoint Theory

Ardill (2013) clarified that standpoint theory was not about using the premise of being impartial to favour a particular standpoint, but rather that it should be "understood in an attempt to address power. Nor does it romanticise the standpoints of oppressed/marginalised groups" (p. 332). The aim is to understand the oppressed. In the particular case of my research with First Nations, Métis, and Inuit youths, it was vital to understand their perspective. Youths are usually meant "to follow the rules set by their parents, teachers, and other authority figures…. have complete trust in the decisions made by these authority figures, and if they question or become resistant to these rules, children are occasionally labeled oppositional" (Medina-Minton, 2018, p. 439). The label *insolent* may be a questionable one for educators to use in light of the holistic perspectives on life by the First Nations, Métis, and Inuit youths and the cultural learning process. Medina-Minton (2018) argued that youths raised in their own communities have more extensive obligations to their community and will emulate the elders to achieve the necessary and expected subsequent independence.

> Taking this cultural practice into account while assessing the importance of autonomy via role importance in society, has Western culture minimized the role of the child and continued to infantilize them due to subconscious (or even conscious) beliefs that youth

> are not yet functional or contributory to the society at large? (Medina-Minton, 2018, p. 445)

Based on my own experience with Inuit youth in Nuuk, Greenland, as educators, we may need to explore the endurance of First Nations, Métis, and Inuit youths attempting to balance obligations to academic demands while satisfying obligations to the community to best support them. For example, some youngsters may devote time to their studies after school, while others must balance school and work obligations once their school day is done. I have known young people who had to balance work obligations and childcare while attending high school. Such a circumstance as I have described is the very arena from which I want to employ my understanding of standpoint theory, whereby I explore how youth balance multiple roles, and I plan to make contributions to standpoint theory from my work.

The standpoint theory, as explained by Moreton-Robinson (2013), supported my well-being as a Taíno woman conducting academic research. Her points were salient to my cultural identity (see Chapter 1), and her stance has great importance to the values that I suggest the two deities, central to this work, animated. Moreton-Robinson (2013) brought up the point that "intersecting oppressions will situate us in different power relations and affect our different individual experiences under social, political, historical and material conditions that we share either consciously or unconsciously" (p. 340). Moreton-Robinson (2013) explained how factors such as these are made far more intricate by aspects such as our class-standing, our sexuality, whether or not we are able-bodied, our culture and undoubtedly our race. These factors convey "how, when, where and why we conduct research as well as our disciplinary knowledges and training as Indigenous women academics. Our lives are always shaped by the omnipresence of patriarchal white sovereignty and its continual denial of our sovereignty" (Moreton-Robinson,

2013, p. 340). A key aspect to address in light of these factors was resilience. In my thinking, strength is gained by identifying how determined the youth is in negotiating the balance, and I firmly believe that Indigenous researchers conducting Indigenous research from our own standpoint are strongly supported by Ardill (2013), who asserted that

> there is a fundamental discord between what Australia's First Peoples experience and discuss, and what well-intentioned non-Indigenous scholars think is important to First Peoples…. As such, this is a form of colonialism because it mutes the voices of those who have been marginalised by colonisation. (p. 318)

As an Indigenous woman, making apparent the 'hidden' reality experienced by Inuit youths, combined with the facilitation of cultural change and making Indigenous voices heard were essential to my efforts for this thesis work. Discussing the importance of standpoint theory thus formed a natural transition to First Nations, Métis, and Inuit youths becoming empowered. I wanted to put forth the latter for my thesis work, but first, I would like to examine what else standpoint theory has to offer.

How Standpoint Theory Contributes to Indigenous Research

According to Moreton-Robinson (2013), "one of standpoint theory's most important contributions to knowledge production is that it exposes the spurious truth claims to impartiality of patriarchal knowledge production" (p. 333). The above subjectivity must be recognized given that there is a substantially different lens through which knowledge is viewed, for instance, as a white male versus as an Indigenous woman. This partiality is well-demonstrated by Adichie (2009) in her Ted Talk, "The danger of a single story," where she brought to light the importance of learning to see situations from multiple perspectives. Through my thesis, I wanted to quantify the capacity to value the Indigenous lens, which needs to be expanded considerably more.

"Social science researchers are encouraged to draw on their life experience in their work but where they differ from feminists is the degree to which values and morals are recognised as being embedded in all research" (Moreton-Robinson, 2013, p. 333). This exemplifies the contribution of Indigenous women's stance and how their stance can contribute to standpoint theory and require us to "question the ability of patriarchal white knowledge production to make truth claims through an episteme that does not accept there are limits to knowing and the metaphysical traces that underpin its logic" (Moreton-Robinson, 2013, p. 344).

To my great relief, Ardill (2013) supported the contribution of standpoint theory referring to both the feminist standpoint and Indigenous standpoint theories and argued that both contribute similar "conclusions about the illegitimacy of Crown sovereignty and the legitimacy of First Peoples' sovereignties. Equally important, both theories revealed how and why most researchers, lawyers, policy-makers and those privileged enough to construct knowledge fail to embrace First Peoples' sovereignties" (p. 325). Standpoint theory is a tool that we, as Indigenous knowledge makers, can embrace to create a new construction of knowledge that values Indigeneity in academia.

The analysis that I have made on standpoint theory analysis that I conducted so far teased out its contribution, strengthening the feminist and Indigenous perspectives. These are important for constructing Indigenous paradigms for teaching and learning in the very communities these are meant to benefit. The construction of knowledge based on standpoint theory was supported by Foley (2003), who stated that "Indigenous epistemological approaches in an Indigenous standpoint enables knowledge to be recorded for the community, not the Academy. The participants are the owners of the knowledge, not the researcher" (p. 50). The intention with this

point was to demonstrate to educators that successful teaching and curriculum creation is a collective effort that must engage the community as a whole.

I drew on my own experiences as an educator and my Indigenous standpoint to support my work. My effort was echoed by Young et al. (2015), who claimed: "we gave a sense of some of the places… of ways in which their experiences in these places drew them toward ideas which they began to thread together as a way to shape a frame" (p.23). I sincerely want to reiterate how vital it is that educators consider the experiences of Indigenous youths and communities, as these can contribute to entice and shape engagement in youth education. As Dewey (1938) advised, "[e]verything depends upon the *quality* of the experience which is had… There is an immediate aspect of agreeableness or disagreeableness, and there is its influence upon later experiences" (p. 27). We should thus consider what we bring to the table; in this case, I refer to cultural relevance and community, and convey a positive experience because that will determine the outcome, as Dewey (1938) highlighted:

> The *effect* of an experience…sets a problem to the educator. It is his business to arrange for the kind of experiences which, while they do not repel the student, but rather engage his activities are, nevertheless, more than immediately enjoyable since they promote having a desirable future experience. (p. 27)

So, I, too, have reflected on my experiences from my perspective and my relationships with students in my classrooms. My research questions in the previous chapter dealt with my desire to make a grounded contribution and for educators to consider how we may leave students wanting more desirable learning experiences that can keep them showing up at school.

Truancy

The current literature and my lived-in experience supported that students respond well when educators positively reinforce them. London et al. (2016) raised an important point stating that "the existing codified truancy interventions …tend to end in punitive measures, sometimes including misdemeanor charges or fines for students and parents, instead of routinely or consistently offering supports" (p. 21). It is human nature to want to connect with educators who see persons beyond their roles as students. Aelterman et al. (2019) affirmed in their research that feeling that academics demonstrated personal relevance was crucial for attendance and a positive outlook, as well as when they stated that "In contrast, …controlled non-rule following is most strongly predictive of students' feelings of resentment, acting out, cheating, and truancy" (p. 37). It is essential to show students the connections between themselves and what they are learning and that these be meaningful in culturally appropriate epistemologies.

Aldrup et al. (2018) pointed out a few gaps in their research and considered that "thinking-aloud techniques could be an appropriate tool to more profoundly understand which aspects of social support and classroom management are assessed in student and teacher ratings" (p. 1077). In my experience teaching Inuit youths in Nuuk, having regular one-on-one talks with students was invaluable for understanding each individual holistically. Furthermore, "more research is also needed to investigate why students in the same classroom perceive social support differently" (Aldrup et al., 2018, p. 1077). Promoting resilience by accommodating the individual needs of each person is key to them developing a sense of being in control of their destiny. I know, for example, that a young mother who is academically strong but has limited time to do her assignment at home may perform better by being given time to work on her assignment in class, collaborating with a group of peers. In contrast, an individual who has

anxiety may appreciate quiet, individual instruction time with me and at times with a close friend nearby.

Teuscher and Makarova (2018) raised the point of how "peer-relationships are positively related to students' school engagement, but not to their truancy. Furthermore, a good student-teacher relationship not only has positive impacts on students' school engagement, but is also negatively associated with truancy, while school engagement mediates this path" (p. 124). In my experience, each person wants to be at school if they feel they are more than just one more body sitting at a desk. Furthermore, valuing their standpoint is critical, as I highlighted in Chapter One, where I gave the example of how you could not compare a youth from Denmark, who was learning a subject in the only language they had ever spoken; to that of a youth from Greenland, who is learning from kalaallisut as mother tongue; so, in my own experience, keeping this in mind, helped me foster a good student-teacher relationship with the persons in my classes. Teuscher and Makarova (2018) stated: "Concerning the question as to which students are at risk of low school engagement, our study shows that school-related factors in particular seem to be crucial" (p.132). In addition to this, Teuscher and Makarova (2018) emphasized that:

> Some of the results presented above are also important for answering the second question on how relationships with peers and the teachers impact students' school engagement and their truant behavior. In our study, the student-teacher relationship is revealed to be the most important factor in connection with school engagement. (p. 132)

Furthermore, Henry and Yelkpieri (2017) "show[ed] that truancy brings about school drop-outs and affects students' academic output. It was realized that most of the students who attended classes regularly performed better than their counterparts who absented themselves from classes on a regular basis" (p. 43). It is crucial to explore the reasons behind those absences.

Birioukov (2016) made an important distinction that we, as educators, need to understand if we are to make better connections:

> Voluntary absenteeism is concerned with a pupil's motivation to attend a school… [a] student may not wish to attend if the school environment is perceived as hostile and/or as a space that is linked to failure. Involuntary absenteeism refers to [when] due to the circumstances of their lives, [students] are forced to miss school…. [such as] having to work and provide childcare for a family member [or when] supplementing familial income may become more important than attending school on a regular basis. (p. 341)

When we, as educators, are not sensitive to the above distinction, we overlook a key element for determining how to help students. We need to understand the reason behind their absence from school if we are going to be true allies. Birioukov (2016) further supported this when highlighting that:

> The excused/unexcused binary can serve as a tool to identify an "absentee," but does little to delineate the explanation for an absence, which must be performed by variable testing. Due to logistical reasons, quantitative studies are rarely able to capture the full range of variables that may be influencing a student to be absent, thereby providing fragmented and isolated results. Moreover, these variables tend to be student or school centered, and carry the implication that all unexcused absences are a pupil's voluntary decision. The blame for the absence is quickly shifted toward the student, while the wider society is absolved of any responsibility. (p. 347)

Issues like poverty may need to be addressed, as do mental health realities in the context of patriarchy and colonization. These may be contributing factors that we as educators need to consider when exploring the root causes for truancy. In that regard, my question (see Chapter 2)

on how standpoint theory can be applied to study how culturally relevant curricula and curricular resources aim to foster the resilience of Indigenous youths would help address issues rooted outside the confines of the classroom. Issues that go beyond individual realities lived by some young people.

My concerns expressed in this chapter are compounded by the regular treatise of young people who are not well engaged in their school learning and how educators quickly access labels:

> Much like the excused/unexcused binary, school refusal literature, across several countries tends to overlook wider contextual factors, such as poverty, when analyzing the causes and solutions to absenteeism… the Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders, Fifth Edition (DSM-5) links school refusal to anxiety, and truancy to conduct disorders, highlights the pathological attributes assigned to absentees (American Psychiatric Association 2013). (Birioukov, 2016, p. 349)

Once these labels are in place, it is easier to pass on a person experiencing issues to another institution. Such processes with little reflection on how the schools themselves could better accommodate a young person's needs must be devastating to the individuals. Based on what the literature indicated, I wanted to explore how First Nations, Métis and Inuit curricula work to safeguard that each individual feels rooted and connected as much as possible. This curiosity is grounded and fed by my primary question (see Chapter Two) because I think these curricular elements could indeed birth new possibilities. Suppose educators were adequately trained to approach their academic subjects through Indigenous paradigms, and their daily interactions included helping and motivating each youth to connect more deeply at a cultural level. In that case, they could mitigate many of the challenges. Until then, "faced with hostile peers and/or

teachers; irrelevant curriculum; dilapidated buildings; and unjust behavioral punishments, some students may voluntarily choose to avoid an institution they perceive to be unwelcoming" (Birioukov, 2016, p. 352). As educators, we have a responsibility to maximize the number of individuals who feel connected to the education environment, whether in a classroom or in nature. As Dewey (1938) has pointed out, it is not solely about promoting growth, but as educators, we should reflect on the type of growth we encourage, where it leads, and what connections are being made or severed. Standpoint theory further supported this by emphasizing that "when Indigenous students do not respond positively to a teachers' performance of care, the absence of reciprocity is seen as the student's problem, rather than contextualized within a system of power and privilege" (MacGill 2016, p. 240).

MacGill (2016) added that when it comes to social interactions within the education system, Indigenous youths and other minorities are marginalized by a dominant veil of whiteness that fails to hold educators accountable, and this means that "Socially just and inclusive pedagogies are thereby lost in translation when educators fail to account for their performances of care as culturally, socially and structurally located" (p. 240). As teachers, each young person should see us as allies, helping each one pave a road to success built on their terms, rather than seeing us as enablers following a prescribed Western standard of success. As cited in Young et al. (2015), one woman who found support through a student services center supporting Indigenous students felt that her "shifting stories to live by hold potential not only for shaping new possible intergenerational narrative reverberations in her life but…in the future lives of her children, and in the lives of future generations of Aboriginal students" (p. 112). When we assume responsibility to fill this disconnect with Indigenous knowledge, we can build a bridge to

success. I can only dream what my early school years would have been like if I had learned more about my Taíno culture and ancestry in school.

Resilience

I will address the meaning of resilience, which factors play a part in fostering resilience, the role of identity and the relationship between Indigenous youths and resilience. Before I continue discussing the term ‘resilience,’ it is important to preface this section with an acknowledgement that discourse on resilience in the context of Indigeneity can be contentious in academia. Some scholars circumvent the message of an individual being in adversity. I explored resilience as a way of helping educators envision a future learning environment that is void of the challenges Indigenous youth are subjected to. My stance is because the Western knowledge system is taken for granted and often assigns the individual Indigenous youngster deficit.

> The American Psychological Association defines the term *resilience*
>
> as the process of adapting well in the face of adversity, trauma, tragedy, threats, or significant sources of stress—such as family and relationship problems, serious health problems, or workplace and financial stressors. As much as resilience involves "bouncing back" from these difficult experiences, it can also involve profound personal growth. (American Psychological Association, 2020, para. 4)

As cited in the *Center on the Developing Child at Harvard* (The President and Fellows of Harvard College, 2020), some elements generally influence individuals toward resilience even when faced with extreme hardship. They argue that simply because a person is resilient in one situation does not guarantee they will react the same way when faced with another challenge; however, when there is sufficient empowerment, a type of buffer is created by these positive

impacts, which enhance overall resilience. The elements that compensate when facing adversity are:

1. facilitating supportive adult-child relationships;
2. building a sense of self-efficacy and perceived control;
3. providing opportunities to strengthen adaptive skills and self-regulatory capacities; and
4. mobilizing sources of faith, hope, and cultural traditions. (The President and Fellows of Harvard College, 2020, para. 5)

Psychology Today (n.d.) likewise addressed resilience and what actually generates it. They attributed it to having a "positive attitude, optimism, the ability to regulate emotions, and the ability to see failure as a form of helpful feedback" (para. 2). Having optimism allows a person to calmly reflect on their challenges and think about what approach may be of benefit to address the adversity in the best possible way (Psychology Today, n.d., para.3). They asserted that "early environments and life circumstances play a role in how resilient genes are ultimately expressed" (Psychology Today, n.d., para. 4). The more we, as educators, can positively shape what we can in these environments by championing Indigenous pedagogies, the greater the likelihood of promoting resilience.

Presenting young people with challenges within their scope of ability is essential in helping foster resilience. As cited in the Center on the Developing Child (2020), stress is not always necessarily detrimental because:

> There are numerous opportunities in every child's life to experience manageable stress—and with the help of supportive adults, this "positive stress" can be growth-promoting.

> Over time, we become better able to cope with life's obstacles and hardships, both physically and mentally. (para. 6)

Caqueo-Urízar et al. (2021) conducted a study driven by the fact that looking into the relationship between resilience and life satisfaction has become a topic of much interest. This interest is due to acknowledging resilience as an essential element in enriching the welfare of young people (Caqueo-Urízar et al., 2021, p.1). What they revealed was that most of the studies fail to direct their attention toward ethnic minority youths, so they wanted "to assess the mediating relationship of resilience on the association between ethnic identity and life satisfaction" (Caqueo-Urízar et al., 2021, p.1). What they found was that evidently, "strengthening ethnic identity and resilience strategies could increase students' life satisfaction" (Caqueo-Urízar et al., 2021, p.1). This finding supports my inquiry in addressing that if teachers are adequately trained in delivering culturally relevant lessons, the identity and resilience of the Indigenous youths in their classrooms could be kindled into a force with which to be reckoned.

Burnette et al. (2018) researched Indigenous youths, and their work has shown three predominant topics: "fostering fond memories and family bonding through "living off the land," enabling experiential intergenerational teaching and learning, and promoting resourcefulness and offsetting economic marginalization" (p. 369). Their findings suggest that well-being in Indigenous communities can be accomplished by encouraging subsistence through "sustainable and organic approaches … by facilitating positive nutrition and diet, exercise, and subjective well-being" (p.369). Not only is this notably reflected in some of the curricula which I will expound on, but it circles back to the earlier supporting argument presented by the Center on the Developing Child (2020), who

highlighted "building a sense of self-efficacy" and "cultural traditions" as key elements that compensate when facing adversity (para. 5).

The final point of inquiry regarding defining resilience by seeing it through an Indigenous lens came from Hatala et al. (2017), who revealed

> how concepts of time and the future inform processes of resilience among Indigenous adolescents within an urban Canadian context...The analysis revealed complex processes of and navigations between moments of distress and strategies for resilience. The distressing contexts in which Indigenous youth often find themselves can impact the development of their concepts of time and limit their abilities to conceptualize a future. (p.1330)

Hatala et al. (2017) examined how youngsters need to have an outlook toward the future to nourish their resilience, and this was sustained "by (a) nurturing a sense of belonging, (b) developing self-mastery, and (c) fostering cultural continuity" (p. 1330). They found that the level at which communities are able to participate in activities that represent them for the uniqueness of their culture can help develop resilience in young people given that "These processes facilitate collective identity, a sense of pride in history and traditional culture that are fostered by traditional storytelling, connections to Indigenous languages, relationships to the land and sacred place, etc." (p. 1332). Standpoint theory supported its corollary in defending that the obligation to look after young people is shared by the core and the extended members of Indigenous families; however, "this model of care has historically been seen as lacking by colonial authorities and thereby was the very principle from which the policies of the Stolen Generation emerged" (MacGill, 2016, p. 240). MacGill (2016) further contended that Indigenous scholars are cognizant of the importance of acknowledging the standpoint of Indigenous youths

in schools in order to nurture holistic connections. When it comes to the resilience of Indigenous youths, cultural relevance and community cannot be extricated from any plan of action. They are fundamental elements. The strength of Indigenous youths hinges on these elements.

Changing the narrative of what it means to come to school to be educated has the potential to foster robust engagement. In drawing upon my experience, the current Danish education model adopted by the Naalakkersuisut (Government of Greenland) to educate Inuit youth is one of the major factors that need to be addressed rather than solely considering building resilience. Perhaps youth would not have to fight to succeed or overcome obstacles in a system of education that is built with young Danes in mind but could succeed in an education system that prioritizes their needs and values. Implementing change to educate youngsters on how their own culture and on how their First Nations, Métis, or Inuit ancestors faced and overcame adversity has far-reaching implications that cannot be absorbed in the same way as learning about cultures to which youths cannot relate. If resilience can flourish in a young person who feels connected to and supported by just one key individual, imagine the empowering potential of feeling that encouragement all around or the empowerment of seeing one's own culture take front and center stage in education.

Theoretical Frameworks, Methodologies and Ethics

In addressing theoretical frameworks, I anticipated a more significant similarity among applied theories; however, the choices made by researchers varied greatly. I saw this as a potential contributor to the challenge of resolving the problem. I reiterated the value of Indigenous standpoint theory because it contended that "Indigenous scholarship is forging a new agenda that is necessary to change the existing power imbalance of contemporary literature theory" (Foley, 2003, p. 50). As I indicated earlier, the power imbalance is ubiquitous and

viewing the situation through this theoretical lens was appropriate and the one I was most inclined to apply.

I, however, saw the value behind critical race theory because it underpinned "that race, instead of being biologically grounded and natural, is socially constructed and that race, as a socially constructed concept, functions as a means to maintain the interests of the white population that constructed it" (Encyclopædia Britannica, 2021). Charles (2017) conceptualized the "disruption, of a particular young female subject/citizen" (p. 182). Charles (2017) provides another lens that unapologetically looked at some educators' motivation and probable 'saviour complex' reasoning for choosing remote placements in the midst of forming their teacher identities. There are significant differences between showing up to educate versus showing up to rescue or showing up to learn from the community. I saw the value of applying this when reflecting on my lived experiences. During my time in Nuuk, Greenland, I felt the strength of encouraging my students to educate their peers and me on their interests. I showed up to learn from them, thus shifting the balance of power.

I believe the assortment of theoretical frameworks encountered may be contributing to the painstakingly long processes toward enacting change. My observation was similarly considered by Martin et al. (2017), who stated, "what can academic teaching staff do pedagogically to help students persist regardless of institutional outcome? A survey of the existing literature on the topic of teaching and pedagogy revealed it to be largely anecdotal, diffuse and often conflicting" (p.1160). This lack of consensus is an ever-present quandary.

When shifting the discussion toward methodologies in my literary review, I found that strategies were far more analogous than when I encountered copious amounts of theoretical frameworks. I observed an overall inclination for researchers to lean towards qualitative research

methods, mixed methods and case studies. Some studies presented their methodology quite unambiguously; others failed to elaborate on the details of their methodology. This revelation imparted the importance of being discerning and being very clear in the details provided.

Another suitable example addressing the need for culturally relevant training explained how some participants in one study "expressed commitment to teaching in urban schools and their articulated desire to facilitate text-based literary discussion in secondary English classrooms" (Gatti & Catalano, 2015, p.151). Data sources were made clear; timing of data collection; type of data, frequency and length of the interviews and one case "focused on Rachael's perception of learning to teach English, her experience with the LEE program, and her relationship to her students, cooperating teacher, and co-resident" (Gatti & Catalano, 2015, p.152). The authors' statement gave me the sense that it was essential to evaluate case studies that included more than just one set of represented individuals. I realized that there were three key aspects I needed to examine in looking at truancy.

In my analysis, I plan to focus on the curricula in light of the potential impact on students, teachers, and the community. By considering a more inclusive group of players, the analysis included the necessary scope to address the challenge that truancy encompasses. I examined multiple perspectives to withstand criticism, which is, again, best done through the application of standpoint theory.

Ethical considerations the analysis presented consisted of a rich array of concerns that were worth deliberating for my analysis. One example demonstrated how looking at the

> frustration of students who enter schools where teachers…create an environment built on the values of the 'culture of power,' but students lack the life experience to understand the unspoken social expectations about behaviour, power and 'success'. This dynamic extends

> to the content of the learning also as implicit values so often determine *what* is to be learned. (Osborne, 2013, p.177)

In this analysis of curricular resources, I was attracted toward examining it through my own eyes as an Indigenous researcher reflecting on my lived experience teaching Inuit youngsters. In discussing a *Reciprocal Research Partnership Model of Indigenous Thriving Futures* (RRPM), a model grounded on Indigenous ways of knowing became more palpable when "The RRPM prioritizes Indigenous values for the development and conduct of research: respect responsibility, reciprocity, and relationships" (Craven et al., 2016, p.36). Most readings discussing ethical considerations brought up the theme of inequality. Transparency is essential if educators want to promote trust in academia.

In a discussion about how to shift the paradigm towards progress with new options, a critical ethical aspect rested in knowing that "establishing the integrity of alternative programs is essential to ensure their survival…the learning experiences of students will be invalidated if community members and potential employers question the academic integrity of the alternative education program" (Wilson et al., 2011, p. 34). Educators need to endeavour to be welcomed in good faith, and I posit a step leading toward this can come via the application of Indigenous curricula and Indigenous curricular resources. The subsequent section addressed key themes.

Key themes

My research to support the analysis examining truancy and resilience revealed four key themes, and I presented these as 1. Considering culture, 2. Language, 3. Neoliberalism, and 4. Place.

Considering culture

First of all, I recognized that educators should be sufficiently trained in the Indigenous cultural history and values of their students prior to commencing their teaching experiences. Martin et al. (2017) highlighted that "most academics are subject matter experts and do not have the pedagogic knowledge, expertise or support to cope with the current curricular 'paradigm shift'" (p.1161), which is why culturally relevant education for our teachers is of utmost urgency before more young individuals become truant. Martin et al. (2017) supported this by arguing that the majority of academics have minimal awareness of cultural knowledge (p. 1162). Furthermore, educators need to realize that cultural relevance is not something you 'accommodate' to appease but is legally recognized as a fundamental right and that in accordance with the

> United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child…children have the right to learn and use the language and customs of their families, whether or not these are shared by the majority of people in the country where they live… (United Nations Child Rights, 1989, Article 30) [and] to have access, when possible, to an education in their own culture, provided in their own language (Article 14.3, p.7). (as cited by Staley et al., 2019, p. 85)

Reflecting on my lived experience, I can attest to how this is an issue of great concern in Greenland, for example, where it has been reported that many *kalaallit* youths are not performing as strong academically as their Danish counterparts, and thus are unable to go on to higher education degrees (“Bekymring: Dårligere Karakterer Hos Ansøgere Fra Grønland,” 2018). This observation resonated with 'How can we get youth to measure up to the colonial standard?' and was not stopping to ask, 'Why can youth not be fairly measured in their mother tongue?' which allows me to segue into my next key point- language.

Language

Language is a significant point supported by Jessen Williamson and Vizina (2017), who contended that "[t]he disconnect from local cultures and languages leaves indigenous learners neither fully immersed in their own languages, nor necessarily capable of competing for opportunities using the non-indigenous language(s) of the majority" (p.47). One argument had been that educating in the non-Indigenous language gives individuals an advantage, but the evidence indicated to the contrary. This contrary view brought to mind the study by Palmer-Clarke (2015), where she highlighted 'Triple-Learning' which is "… a transactional process between three distinct languages and registers, as well as three cultures and subcultures within the community of practice as they engage their studies" (p. 190). Palmer-Clarke (2015) further explored how in her study, students

> were maneuvering among three distinct registers of English. Fluent in their home language, these students came to live in the social realms of the local environment. The local provincial English heard in everyday speech in the local community is not the same as the academic language they are expected to master as they progress to success. Academic language is largely discipline based and tends to be restrictive and more formal compared to the social language used in their home countries and local community. Academic language is complex and specialized because each discipline uses variations or sub-registers. (p. 192-193)

The above passage resonated with my experience with the youngsters at GUX Nuuk. The challenge of navigating the local Greenlandic dialect, academic Greenlandic, Danish, academic Danish, English, academic English, as well as, for many, the new culture of life in the city compounded by the culture of academic life, is bound to leave many feeling taxed and perplexed. Such level of frustration was well-addressed in the documentation produced by the Greenland

Reconciliation Commission (Forsogningskommissionen, 2017), which affirmed that the inability to master the Danish language affected not only the potential to acquire an education but likewise employment.

Indigenous youths deserve to see their language treated with respect and a sense of primacy within their schools. McCarty, T. L., Romero, M. E., and Zepeda, O. (2006) discussed how

> Indigenous communities face enormous challenges in revitalizing and maintaining their languages. Working with drastically reduced numbers of speakers, communities must acknowledge and transform internalized images of Native languages as being what youth in our study characterize as "dirty," "backward," or "the way of the devil." Contesting such images requires what Watahomigie calls "reverse brainwashing" or "re-educating" community members "on the importance and priority of the values and knowledge embodied in our culture" [and how this is] compounded by the homogenizing forces of globalization and the hegemony of English. (p. 43)

The message being delivered by prioritizing Indigenous languages in schools is one of empowerment and self-determination. So why does this challenge persist? In my mind, a possible reason could be found in the next point on neoliberalism.

Neoliberalism

Evidence suggested that there is a need to "redress the balance…[with] an innovative approach to challenge the current context where education and service provision more broadly privileges western values" (Osborne, 2013, p. 179). From my perspective, ' power in numbers' is needed to counterargue the status quo and address the present-day inequity. I suggest a more unified front arguing towards the same changes stands a better chance than a lone few. Just as

Shay (2016) was thought-provoking with the question of how can "Aboriginal researchers (be) able to conduct research that is motivated by our agendas, ideas and aspirations in a discipline that perpetuates imperialism, racism, and exclusion?" (Shay, 2016, p. 274), so must Aboriginal educators and allies work together to promote Indigenous knowledge- because the status-quo dictates it is easier to leave things as they are. This ties to my earlier point of the 'saviour complex.' Having those in power assuming things are currently done the right way and the only way makes it difficult to challenge the colonial agenda: "neoliberal common sense shapes teacher education writ large … whether that be the preparation of teachers as technicians, the focus on teachers' testable content knowledge, and the shortening (or even bypassing) of teacher preparation altogether" (Gatti & Catalano, 2015, p.150).

Neoliberalism can be disguised as presenting a pro-Indigenous agenda, but there is another crucial factor that educators must be wary of "when attempting to be 'inclusive,' a tendency exists in the literature on teaching and pedagogy to conceive of Indigenous students as a homogeneous group with similar abilities, experiences and preferences" (Martin et al., 2017, p.1168). There needs to be a thoughtful recognition of the fact that there are different compositions of Indigenous groups (Mackie & MacLennan, 2015). This recognition motivated selecting the curricula and curricular resources I chose to analyze. This is similarly the case in Greenland, where schools represent many Inuit cultures and students with a combination of Inuit and Danish roots, and many others for that matter (Jessen Williamson, 2011). A holistic approach needs to address this in a respectful manner.

As Ladson-Billings (2014) highlighted, "Today researchers… are… evolving in new ways that require us to embrace a more dynamic view of culture… students learn about static images of cultural histories, customs, and traditional ways of being. However, in reality, culture

is always changing" (p.75). Educators must find a way to address this ever-evolving cultural makeup in a way that is not overhauled by a neoliberal agenda. Addressing the pervasiveness of neoliberalism in schools is indeed a critical theme that needs attention if educators are to entice individuals to remain in school throughout their days. After all, the message of whose knowledge inextricably ties to the challenge we face. As Staley et al. (2019) indicated, "To move forward, the dialogue and the conception of a 'good education' needs to be reframed so that it matches the conception of the 'good' that is founded on Aboriginal perspectives" (p.80).

Secondly, I recognized how the neoliberal agenda continues to be considered supreme and indisputable. Shay (2016) suggested this by questioning how could "Aboriginal researchers (be) able to conduct research that is motivated by our agendas, ideas and aspirations in a discipline that perpetuates imperialism, racism, and exclusion" (p. 274)? Thus, should curricula be driven by a balanced approach that takes a vaster account of the Indigenous agenda? We cannot move towards progress without realizing this.

Third, I recognized a strong desire at many local school levels, to be allowed to have their own, community-focused, decision-making power, rather than having to continue to follow any centralized cookie-cutter government agenda that overlooks the needs of the local populations, as highlighted by Osborne (2013), Trimmer (2013), and Loh and Hu (2014). I argue this indicates the more personalized the local schools are able to cater to the needs of the community, the lower the cases of truancy will be.

Culturally Relevant Training

I suggest that teachers of Indigenous students ought to have a certain degree of understanding of the culture surrounding them. From my perspective, it is essential to have some solid knowledge of the people, the community, their past, their current reality, and the values

within that culture. The research indicates that non-Indigenous teachers of Indigenous students need increased cultural knowledge prior to placement. As mentioned in Chapter One, my own lived experience in Nuuk, such as the effect of taking lessons in kalaallisut, and the research conducted appear to confirm this. For example, Charles (2017) suggested that "for many of the pre-service teachers it is the first time they have visited the Northern Territory and/or a remote Aboriginal community. There is no specific unit of study in the teacher education program about Aboriginal education" (p.180). There are teachers who may have formed preconceived opinions of how they will conduct their lessons or what to anticipate. They may not be considering that some "students who experience complex life experiences may be further disadvantaged by a lack of "school capital" (Wilson et al., 2011, p. 33). However, when aiming to steer away from the deficit discourse, those seeking equity may reflect instead on the missing cultural capital of the educators that could be improved to increase attendance through better connections with the youths.

Raising awareness and addressing the saviour complex problem, which can be encountered, should be incorporated into teacher training programs before service. "Through campaigns like 'the girl effect' and 'girl up,' privileged young women are invited to engage with difference and diversity in ways that may fail to challenge colonial discourse and racialized power structures" (Charles, 2017, p.186). The research indicates that when teachers arrive with a mindset of being saviours, they fail to see how they contribute to the problem. It may be so deep-seated that young educators may not realize the saviour role they play and sincerely believe in their good intentions. Not raising such awareness perpetuates ignorance, which should be addressed, especially since most teachers, I believe, enter into teaching with the best of intentions.

Place

I suggest that when education is tied to place, it creates a holistic and natural sense of belonging. We as educators must support and become champions that push for mandates to:

> Shift the environment of what is measured and what is valued in remote schools, from a narrow frame of attendance and benchmarks in English literacy and numeracy to an environment of intergenerational local knowledge that is valued by students, the community and the school staff alike. (Osborne, 2013, p. 179)

If we as educators are going to empower Indigenous youths, we ought to demonstrate that we understand the significance local knowledge holds and how it helps people feel rooted in the land, knowledge, and each other. It is not an outlandish notion for Indigenous knowledge systems and values to be perceptible, recognizable, and available, as Stelmach (2011) underscored by declaring that "The infusion of external values and loss of autonomy is one potential area of concern for rural schools that typically boast the advantage of greater local engagement and control compared to many urban schools" (Stelmach, 2011, p.39). Arguing for local control in light of local vested interest is furthermore encouraged by Trimmer (2013), who asked readers to consider that it is advisable to increase this independence away from the control of centralized powers given that "for sustainable change to occur in schools, teachers and school leaders must feel confident enough to take those risks in their decision-making…Such schools can have diverse needs that are not aligned to centrally developed policy requirements" (Trimmer, 2013, p. 179). As I construed from the research, the unique lessons and connections learned from each place are best taught locally.

That being said, I would be remiss not to acknowledge, that as I see it, Indigenous youths could benefit, to an extent, from some of the aspects delivered through Western curricula, as

Martin et al. (2017) cited in their work, the "research that suggests at least some Indigenous students would prefer greater 'clarity' if not more explicit direction from academic teachers, particularly when it comes to assessment and faculty expectations" (p.1166). This leads to the question of 'should we ensure student success at all costs; that is, at the cost of Indigenous knowledge?' Martin et al. (2017) further discus that "it is incumbent upon teachers to teach students the rules and codes that constitute an invisible 'culture of power' operating in mainstream educational contexts" (p. 1166). Would following national curricula and teaching success within the Western system secure a more significant number of Indigenous youths who complete their education? I argue the answer is 'no' because it has not done so up to now. This observation indicates a need for balance. Would solely following national curricula mean an increase of Indigenous youths in academia, strengthening the needed presence of Indigenous knowledge within education? Again, it has not worked so far, so this is a disputable point. I argue that as long as we follow a strictly Western and Eurocentric agenda that does not address place through Indigenous perspectives, we will not capture sufficient interest nor imagination to entice more significant numbers of Indigenous youths to want to connect to the education system. Place needs to play a key role in curricula (Middlemiss, 2018) to secure the future success of Indigenous youths, balanced with academic capital.

A Paradigm Shift

I would contend that the main shift has come from usually relying on the deficit discourse to realizing and appreciating that a contributing element in this problem of truancy is found in the value system. In this sense, it appears we are gradually coming to terms with the fact that applying a neoliberal agenda and Western paradigms does not lead to progress, not when it comes to Indigenous youths and not when it comes to non-Indigenous youths either.

Ellsworth (1989) asserted that educators should be mindful of avoiding binary decisions based on what are considered to be 'rational' or 'irrational' arguments by stating that "Rational argument has operated in ways that set up as its opposite an irrational Other, which has been understood historically as the province of women and other exotic Others" (p.301). This passage highlighted in my mind that we, as educators, should reflect on what is negotiable or non-negotiable in education. Who defines it? I suggest addressing the needs of Indigenous youths by addressing historical trauma, prioritizing Indigenous knowledge, and establishing an open line of communication can play a significant role in reducing truancy. These observations reveal some crucial factors; therefore, the following points which were examined were those of gaps and future contributions.

Gaps and future contributions

I suggest that the gaps in research regarding truancy among Indigenous youths appear to be more prevalent in some places in the world than in others. Although there is still much work to be done, there are systems in place to help bring Indigenous paradigms to be applied in learning environments, particularly into schools and communities here in Canada, whereas this is not the case in Greenland. There seemed to be a gap regarding many aspects of this topic when it came to the Inuit in Greenland, from the theoretical to the methodological.

The lack of incorporation of community resources such as the contribution of community members for disseminating Indigenous knowledge and a greater acceptance of Indigenous paradigms appeared to be a gap in Greenland. It should be said, though, that the concept of Elders in Greenland is not comparable to that of what exists in Canada, and this in itself can account for this gap (Csonka, 2005). When addressing the subject of self-actualization, it appeared that the absence of local decision-making power presents an obstacle. In my mind, it is

time we looked at the preparation of educators if we expect to see an increase in positive results. Such was the argument when we considered how effective educators could help motivate Indigenous youngsters to stay the course (Martin et al., 2017). Educators have to be prepared to see the journey to education with an open mind. Biermann and Townsend-Cross (2008) explored this autochthonous approach when they stated that

> because of the enculturation in Western systems of education, a class needs to be brought back to a common starting point, so the first part of any subject usually consists of active unlearning, of collapsing the barriers that have been erected in the way of true, liberating education. (p.150)

In considering Indigenous paradigms and the importance attached to relationship building, we must pay attention to the impact that First Nations, Métis, and Inuit curricula can have on teacher insight of their students and engagement with them and the community; with one of the aims being that of positively shifting perception regarding Indigenous methodologies, truancy, identity, readiness to learn, teach and work in Indigenous communities. For non-Indigenous educators to succeed in the successful implementation of Indigenous curricula, I believe supporting programs such as the one promoted by the *Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development* (OECD, 2017) is essential:

> A model that works well for schools with a number of Indigenous students is to employ Indigenous Support Workers; such staff can address barriers faced by Indigenous students and identify opportunities to enhance their engagement and success in education. More specifically, such staff can contribute to ensuring regular attendance of Indigenous students at school, supporting teachers in building sound relationships with Indigenous students and their parents, initiating new curriculum resources, and leading professional

development for teachers and whole-of-school activities to grow the cultural competence of staff and students together. (p. 3)

Secondly, I considered the impact on youth. To examine experiences and perception regarding Indigenous methodologies to understand their benefits, I considered the First Nations, Métis, and Inuit curricula and curricular resources in light of the potential effect on truancy, identity, and the readiness to learn that students could have if educators collaborated in the construction of culturally relevant lessons.

Thirdly, I considered the impact on the community, of community involvement and of Indigenous ways of knowing, and how this can weave into the possible reduction in truancy through the application of Indigenous knowledge systems.

Taking all these elements into account has allowed me to arrive at the construction of my methodology, which I will expand on in the next chapter.

Chapter Four: Methodology

Up to now, I have discussed my positionality, my research questions, and how my lived experiences guided them, and my findings after conducting the literature review. It is now time to look into my work on the methodology. I intend to demonstrate how I developed it to bring all the elements discussed together through a holistic approach.

Rationale

I am establishing that the interaction between teachers and Indigenous youths, particularly when it comes to resilience and truancy, is an under-researched topic. The extant research is primarily reliant on the deficit discourse and focuses on the youths negatively rather than on the educators and the curricula. Furthermore, there is insufficient work in academia being produced by Indigenous scholars to support the application of Indigenous methodologies and standpoint theory, particularly concerning the implications of Indigenous curricula and curricular resources. I intend to contribute to the breadth of information future educators of Indigenous youths will access.

Ethical considerations

I posit that I have already established the importance of Indigenous educators to give voice to Indigenous youth issues. Therefore, I have retained the application of Indigenous methodologies for my thesis and have woven it with my Indigenous background and my lived experience and positionality, all supported by standpoint theory. I bring my experiences of what I have learned and where I have learned because "Narratives of place based in personal experience provide points of access as well as conflict for a wider audience across cultures" (Palmer, 2005, p. 163). I hope that other Indigenous scholars will reflect on their Indigeneity and how they can apply it toward the advancement of Indigeneity in academia. I hope that non-Indigenous

educators can understand pedagogical possibilities that extend beyond the binary systems of Western education to see how other options could help them work with Indigenous youngsters and why and how they should use curricula and curricular resources such as those presented. The above sentiment was supported by Molnar (2009):

> An ethical insufficiency is likely to exist if we dull our compassionate person, insulating ourselves from the difference of others such as students, through narrow or restricted concerns for processes, structure and organization concerning such demands as student and teacher accountability, efficiency and achievement. (pp.244-245)

As educators, we have a responsibility to expand our purview beyond the binary constructs in education and be open to decolonizing if we are to effectively shift the paradigm toward Indigenous value systems.

Method of data collection

To achieve this aim, I collected secondary qualitative data; consisting of existing, published curricula and curricular resources easily accessible to educators. I examined a multitude of peer-reviewed academic journals to analyze the work. I compared White-settler youths to Indigenous youths and realized that the latter have a lower high school completion rate (Julien, 2016). This disparity is historically well-documented (Wotherspoon and Milne,2020) and well recognized, as noted in *The Globe and Mail*: "Indigenous teenagers finish high school at much lower rates than other young Canadians. That disparity has a high cost, for Indigenous people and the country" ("Globe Editorial: More Indigenous people in Canada are graduating from high school than ever. It's still not nearly enough", 2020, para. 2).

Concurrently, the prolific development of well-crafted curricula and curricular resources has not yielded a notable reversal to this situation. I contend that this can be attributed not to the

lack of resources but rather to the lack of teacher education regarding how and why it is vital to use the resources available. This produced reverberations, which in my mind were supported by standpoint theory in Chapter 3, when Moreton-Robinson (2013) challenged us to "question the ability of patriarchal white knowledge production" (p. 344). Therefore, analyzing the documents for this purpose is a suitable approach toward answering my questions, building resilience and reducing truancy.

Existing Data: Source, Production and Criteria

I sourced the curricula and curricular resources through the University of Saskatchewan's library network and used the same approach for collecting peer-reviewed articles. Some curricula and curricular resources were produced to aid regions and provinces, while others were aimed toward broader audiences. Each of these is available electronically. The criteria used for selecting material were in terms of the scope of the audience toward which the curricula and curricular resources were aimed. I wanted my work to be of relevance to teachers in environments where the youngsters represented were primarily representative of one Indigenous group, and to teachers responsible for Indigenous youth coming from multiple Indigenous groups; thus, ensuring the work was relevant to a range of audiences. I echoed this choice through my positionality and motivating factors addressed in Chapter One.

Qualitative methods

I reflected on my own storied life (see Chapter One) and interactions as an educator of primarily Inuit youth and as a Taíno, teaching Inuit youth for a total of nearly six years. Moreover, I considered my own experiences as a Taíno who has experienced Western education and as a Taíno graduate student learning more about Indigenous ways of knowing, particularly concerning education systems. To understand truancy and resilience, I used thematic analysis

based on the key themes that emerged from my literary review, these being considering culture, language, neoliberalism, culturally relevant training, and place. I juxtaposed these as I examined the curricula and curricular resources in relation to Indigenous ways of knowing and my application of Kasibahagua and Sassuma Arnaa to furthermore align with the underlying question I posed on how these deities can converge (see Chapter Two).

Evaluation and justification of methodological choices

I chose to analyze the curricula and curricular resources that are made by Indigenous curricula and curricular resource developers by applying Indigenous methodology and standpoint theory, always focusing on what educators can draw from each document to support Indigenous youths and reduce truancy and why these are key. I always relied on Kasibahagua birthing the necessary actions and Sassuma Arnaa being mindful of how it feeds the mind, body, and soul and spirit.

Why were other methods not suitable?

There is a lot of extant research written about Indigenous youths that relies on the deficit discourse and isolates the problems encountered by giving piecemeal observations of youngsters without exploring the role of educators and the curricula being used to educate. Reiterated in my argument for standpoint theory (see Chapter Three), Ardill (2013) reminded the reader that standpoint theory should be "understood in an attempt to address power" (p. 332). Given the underrepresentation of Indigenous scholars in academia, Western methodologies continue to be applied to studies about Indigenous youth issues. The solutions proposed do not tend to address the holistic nature of research pertinent to Indigenous populations.

Seeing that I argued for standpoint theory and its use in teasing out Indigenous knowledge, it was only reasonable to propose the application of Indigenous methodologies for my thesis work. Honouring Indigenous qualitative research felt natural for me (see Chapter One), and I was inspired to cultivate the fertile ground of knowledge shared by many Indigenous scholars whose works decolonize while legitimizing Indigenous knowledge.

When it comes to Indigenous paradigms, a Western skeptic might ask, hopefully out of ignorance and not out of malicious arrogance, "Why does it matter?" or "What is the rush?" The response to this is eloquently provided by UNESCO (United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization, 2017), when they discussed the predicament of Indigenous youth solely exposed to Eurocentric ways of learning, and stated that:

> Teachers replace parents and elders as the holders of knowledge and authority. National languages become the medium of instruction, while vernacular languages are sidelined. Formal education may therefore contribute to an erosion of cultural diversity, a loss of social cohesion and the alienation and disorientation of indigenous youth. (“Revitalizing Knowledge - Indigenous Education,” 2017)

In other words, the colonial systems used to educate Indigenous youth have been the culprits of much of the extant dissonance, and it is paramount that we, as educators, intensify the effort to change the future because "representation of aboriginals by non-aboriginals, initially by anthropologists and latterly by political scientists, sometimes serves to obscure this aboriginal identity. More than this, the aboriginal voice during colonial times was not represented in either the curriculum or the faculty" (Atleo, 2001, p. 1). As I saw it, Atleo emphasized how the impetus for this metamorphosis hinges on the sustenance that Indigenous paradigms provide. From the statements by Atleo (2001) and UNESCO (“Revitalizing Knowledge - Indigenous Education,”

2017), I assumed that the more we bring Indigenous paradigms to the forefront of education, the greater the number of Indigenous youths that will choose to be educated.

Kasibahagua

To continue with eyes wide open on my identity, I wanted to discuss the importance of Kasibahagua. As previously mentioned for the Taíno people, Kasibahagua symbolizes the womb of Atabey, likewise known as Atabeira, the Earth Mother (Kasibahagua Taíno Cultural Society, 2021). As the symbol of fecundity, the womb nourishes life, and to me, it nourishes possibility. Atabey appealed to me because she is the supreme goddess of the Taíno people. She is "the goddess of fresh water and human fertility" (Rouse, 1992, p. 13). She manifests herself in three keyways which I applied to my methodology. I grew seeds of Indigenous ontology with Atabey first, as a nurturer or maternal figure; second, I grew seeds of Indigenous axiology as Caguana, "the spirit of love"; and third, as methodology, Guabancex, the fierce "goddess of the hurricane" (Rouse, 1992, p. 122). Kasibahagua, as the womb of Atabey, is in my mind, the womb of possibility, regardless of whether she manifests as nurturer (Atabey), as love (Caguana), or as the disrupting hurricane (Guabancex). "Whatever becomes of Taíno resurgence moving forward, its survived and rekindled spiritual expressions point to a desired and needed world where: the future is ancestral; the future is ancient; the future is Atabey" (González, 2018, para. 17). No matter which manifestation we explore, Kasibahagua is the constant womb, prepared to birth new possibilities. I honour Kasibahagua for birthing my tenacity and that of those who came before me.

Figure 4.1

La Mujer de Caguana (Woman of Caguana)

Note: La Mujer de Caguana (Woman of Caguana) is a pre–Columbian Taíno petroglyph located at the Caguana Indigenous Ceremonial Park in Utuado, Puerto Rico. While there are diverse interpretations of the symbol's meaning, many Taíno today view it as an anthropomorphic representation of Atabey (Mother Earth consciousness). This symbol of Atabey is becoming increasingly visible and adapted by Caribbean island people, inspiring diverse creative expressions from contemporary art to tattoos. [Photograph and description] by C. González, 2019, (https://www.americanindianmagazine.org/story/abuelas-ancestors-and-atabey-spirit-taino-resurgence)

Sassuma Arnaa

As mentioned earlier, Sassuma Arnaa, according to Greenlandic oral traditions, represents the Lady of the Sea. Jessen Williamson (2014) explained how Sassuma Arnaa was

> an ordinary Inuk girl who grew up and had an affair with a dog. Her father found out and in punishment banned her to an island. In her attempt to gain her father's forgiveness, she tried to cling to the railing of her father's boat as he was rowing away, only to have her

> fingers chopped off. While sinking slowly, her fingers became the whales, the walrus, the seals, the birds, the fish, and any other being that Inuit needed for their livelihood. She sank to the bottom of the sea and became the goddess of all living beings in the sea. She controls the animals and the sea birds, protecting them against human frailty and abuse. Among the Canadian Inuit, she is variously named Sedna, Nuliaajuk, and Takannaaluk. In Greenland she is known as Sassuma Arnaa—the Lady Down Under. She holds power so great that only the greatest, most sensitive and courageous shaman can reach her when she gets angry. (pp. 139-140)

In my mind, what calls me to Sassuma Arnaa is not only that she provides the creatures of the sea that nourish people, but she moreover has the power to withhold them if they are not treated with respect. In relation to my work, I honour Sassuma Arnaa for nourishing the youngsters with whom I have crossed paths in my life, particularly the young people residing in Nuuk while going to high school in Greenland. I also envision showing respect to her by facilitating the ability of individuals to connect with ancestral knowledge through cultural lessons. To me, the depth at which you can respect a culture exponentially grows when you take the time to understand and honour it.

Figure 4.2

Sassuma Arnaa

Note: *Sassuma Arnaa* sculpture by Christian 'Nûno' Rosing is located in Kolonihavn in Nuuk, Greenland. [Photograph] by Bo Ø. Kristensen, 2012

Growing Seeds of Indigenous Methodology with Atabey

The significance of an Indigenous paradigm, when considering Indigenous methodological approaches, is to me all about following a logic that will be understood by and beneficial to the Indigenous community. A seed that needs to be planted in this patch is one of envisioning a better, more inclusive approach to Indigenous research. As Kovach (2016) discussed, "there have been efforts within Indigenous communities…to reimagine the narrative arc of Indigenous research…from a dismissive empiricism to that of socially just relevancy" (p.215). The Indigenous standpoint helps pave the way toward this reimagined future by examining what is impacted by the hegemonic discourse in our society (Foley, 2003); in this case, in particular, this being our Indigenous youths and their motivation to engage in school, which goes back to addressing my primary research question (see Chapter Two). Another seed to plant provided a concrete example of this, and it came from Keane et al. (2017), who presented

their findings from a series of projects in South Africa, and how they could benefit all parties involved

> [o]ne solution that worked well was involving a farming NGO to contribute to setting up chicken farming projects. This initiative could also then serve as an aspect of authentic curriculum design that drew on IK… Amongst urgent concerns for health care, employment, traditional values—even survival, profound lessons in understandings of appropriate science, practical skills-development, and ubuntu emerged. (p. 16)

In considering Indigenous methodology, the logic, in this case, was that the Indigenous knowledge should be fundamental, and the research would stand to benefit from it and vice versa. This relational, holistic approach reflected the connection valued within an Indigenous paradigm. It resonated with me because it is at the root, something I will strive for as I continue my career focusing on teacher education. The logic being that Indigenous students would benefit from teachers educated in Indigenous paradigms. Indigenous students would feel better connected to education and educators and less likely to engage in truancy. The community would feel more invested in the education journey of their youngest members.

Finally, as an Indigenous researcher, I am honoured to be part of a learning journey and contribute along the way. I feel that with such a commitment, the rewards to be reaped could prove to be substantial and, more importantly, holistic and relational (Wilson, 2008). The fact that other researchers are planting seeds in this patch affirms that the roots will grow stronger. "In more recent developments, Indigenous research methodologies are moving away from merely including Indigenous perspectives …to using Indigenous paradigms as the foundation for research" (Singh & Major, 2017, p.11). This holistic approach is demonstrative of a genuine commitment to change. By examining powerful strategies in First Nations, Métis, and Inuit

curricular resources, I hope that all Indigenous peoples can draw from each other and strengthen their resources.

My Taíno heritage played a role in interpreting the First Nations, Métis, and Inuit perspectives, which is something I considered in light of what Kovach (2010) affirmed in stating that "[b]ecause qualitative research is interpretive, the stories of both the researcher and the research participants are reflected in the meanings being made" (p. 26). Consequently, the meaning I had drawn as I examined these resources reflects my Taíno roots, echoing when I proudly walked the Caguana ceremonial site of my Taíno ancestors as a child, on which I will elaborate later on. I also reflected on the knowledge infused by the people who crafted these First Nations, Métis, and Inuit resources. When assessed in terms of beneficial outcomes, it was vital to acknowledge what would set it apart. As Smith (2012) asserted when discussing decolonizing methodologies, "elements that are different can be found in key words such as healing, decolonization, spiritual, recovery" (p. 122). I understand the methodology I applied as one in which these elements were an integral objective of my analysis. These decolonizing elements are essential to standpoint theory and how it facilitates our exploration of the interaction between groups in light of their position in the hierarchy of power; in this case, between educators, Indigenous youths, and the communities in which they live (Medina Minton, 2018). As a woman void of sight might feel in new, unfamiliar surroundings, I, too, cautiously felt my way around the room of metaphoric framing in an Indigenous context. As I continued to familiarise myself and gained a feel for Indigenous paradigms, this steered me toward a greater exploration of my Taíno heritage and a desire to engage with my roots. I, too, endeavoured to disrupt the colonial discourse that has dictated research in academia for far too long. Kovach (2010) captured this direction that the journey was taking for many others when she stated that "as Indigenous

scholars rise through the ranks and manage to sustain their Indigenous identities, they are asking for a validation of Indigenous scholarship, which is reflective of tribal knowledges that move beyond a critique of colonialism" (p. 84). Validation is an ongoing challenge given that "Questions of who is a 'real indigenous' person… and the criteria used to assess the characteristics of authenticity are frequently the topic of conversation and political debate…designed to fragment and marginalize those who speak… in support of indigenous issues" (Smith, 2012, p.76). I do not pretend to be fully at ease feeling my way around this room of conceptual framing, but I long to be. That desire is what guided me here. In the hope that I will not only one day move without fear of knocking anything over, but moreover gain the sight and confidence to step out of the room of metaphoric framing in Indigenous contexts, to navigate in my own Taíno home and see the surrounding neighbourhood housing my fellow stalwart Indigenous brothers and sisters around the world, particularly the kalaallit students who inspired this research.

To continue through a framework that honoured my identity (see Chapter One), I want to return to Atabey. Atabey appealed to me because she is the supreme goddess of the Taíno. As mentioned earlier, she manifests herself in three key ways; first, as a nurturer or maternal figure; second, as Caguana, "the spirit of love"; and third, as Guabancex, "the violent, wild mother of storms volcanoes and earthquakes" (Wikimedia Foundation, 2021).

Growing Seeds of Indigenous Ontology with Atabey

When I considered Indigenous paradigms within the context of my Taíno roots, I saw the holistic soundness of choosing Atabey as a metaphor for Indigenous ontology because of the concept of the triad that manifests within her. Just as Indigenous paradigms present a holistic view of understanding our surroundings, I selected Atabey to represent the ontological aspect,

which is relational to the maternal figure, relational to Caguana, and relational to Guabancex. This representation was supported when I researched and came across readings stating that:

> These reconnections are not only healing and enriching for Taíno, but for Atabey as well… The dire consequences of today's dominant worldviews and economic systems related to the Earth… that are legacies of colonization's victors, make this reconnection to Atabey not only necessary, but urgent; not only for Taíno, but for everyone. (González, 2018)

Reconnecting echoes the reasoning that Moreton-Robinson (2013) presented, relying on standpoint theory and considering that Indigenous peoples intricately connect to their ancestors and their journey toward Indigenous autonomy. The Indigenous worldview is required to repair the legacies prevailing in the hegemonic discourses in curricula.

The Nurturer Growing Seeds of Epistemology

Drawing on the fertile nurturer as an epistemological concept felt like a natural fit for a Taíno research framework. After all, "It is this epistemological foundation that differentiates Indigenous research from Western methodologies" (Kovach, 2010, p.56). The all-encompassing womb protects the child spiritually, physically, and emotionally. Fertility itself is a cyclical process given the fluctuations within the female form and period of fecundity, and it is relational, as it takes a partner to create life. This cycle, in turn, is accessing the future by bringing said life into the world to carry on. We are here and have our knowledge because of our ancestors; future generations will be here and understand knowledge because of our interactions with the spiritual and physical world. The manifestation of Atabey as nurturer was consistent with comprehending knowledge since the maternal figure plays such a prominent role in our cognition and our physical and spiritual growth.

I envisioned Atabey nurturing our understanding of knowledge as roots growing from an amalgamation of seeds. These first epistemology seeds came from New Zealand. In 1996 their Prime Minister instituted a very valuable curriculum aimed at young children ages 0-5. It was the *Te Whāriki,* which was a "genuinely bicultural curriculum document[s], built upon the cultural values beliefs and practices of both Maori and Pakeha (New Zealanders of European origin) …a clear example where theorizing in education from an Indigenous worldview has had a tangible impact" (Macfarlane et al., 2008, p.108). It resonated with me because I saw how these were absent from my knowledge about my ancestors, thus planting the motivation to strive to ensure this does not happen in other educational settings I hope to impact positively or to their educators. A purpose which aligns with how I framed my primary question as well as the findings on neoliberalism I highlighted from Staley et al. (2019) when they argued that "To move forward, the dialogue and the conception of a 'good education' needs to be reframed" (p.80). Therefore, the success comes from watering the seeds of Indigenous knowledge by sourcing it from:

- those who have gone before - and godliness;
- other people in their lives - and relationships;
- the culture's language - and signs and symbols; and
- place - the desire to explore the natural world (Macfarlane et al., 2008, p.109).

This holistic, relational approach acknowledges aspects that too often go unheeded in Eurocentric ways of knowledge. Here the patch of Indigenous understanding of knowledge has firmly planted seeds, and they are taking root.

A second seed to nourish in the patch of Indigenous epistemology came from López (2017), who explained the value of asset-based pedagogy (ABP) and how:

> [s]cholars have argued that there are unique competencies that are essential to the effective teaching of historically marginalized students… Among these competencies is asset-based pedagogy… that views students' culture as a strength, countering the more widespread view that inordinate achievement disparities stem from deficiencies in the child and/or child's culture. Cumulatively, ABP scholarship shares a fundamental belief that teachers who possess an understanding of the sociohistorical influences on traditional marginalized students' trajectories (critical awareness) are better able to cultivate students' knowledge by building on their prior knowledge (cultural knowledge) and incorporating knowledge that validates students' experiences (cultural content integration) into their instruction. Accordingly, ABP is believed to help students develop identities that promote achievement outcomes. (p.193)

Another seed we can nourish with the water of Indigenous paradigms in tending the patch of Indigenous epistemology came from a paper by James (2018). She delved into spirituality in relation to African American women. This relation resonated because my African ancestry was never addressed in-depth while growing up. In acknowledging the importance of self-situating holistically, I paid respect to my African roots and the spirituality they embody.

> By prioritizing Indigenous practices and knowledge sources as organizing principles, Trade/itions [Trans-Atlantic Sacred Orisha Traditions] repositioned Indigenous philosophies by moving them from the margins to the center of knowledge. This relocation set into motion a pattern of relations that activated intersections of mystical, material, human, and ecological elements to generate a subtle alchemy that can advance liberatory aspirations and inspire spiritual development. (p.123)

The root of spirituality plays a key role in Indigenous epistemology. While some may feel that this is not tangible everywhere, James (2018) asserted that in Brazil, it is very much alive, when she explained that "Women leaders in these traditions maintain legacies of language, music, dance, and ritual, the science of divination, and the healing power of spoken and plant medicine" (p.116). These legacies are seeds of actively growing roots of strength and cyclic perseverance. Roots that grow toward my research goal (see Chapter Two) show why it is imperative to educate with a decolonizing lens if we are to kindle a tangible paradigm shift toward Indigeneity in education.

I explored these topics because, as I saw it, I could not carry out a discussion of a methodology without delving into the nature of the ontology and epistemology that would lead me there. When applying Indigenous ontology, it is essential to understand, as described by Wilson (2008), that more than one reality is possible and that "reality is in the relationship that one has with the truth...an object or thing is not as important as one's relationship to it …there is no one definite reality...rather different sets of relationships that make up an Indigenous ontology" (p. 73). He, therefore, concluded that this "reality is not an object but a process of relationships, and an Indigenous ontology is actually the equivalent of an Indigenous epistemology" (Wilson, 2008, p. 73). Wilson (2008) provided the context with the Cree language and how "epistemology is based upon relationships" (p.73). For example, this is the case in Greenlandic, which encompasses this relational understanding within the language. For instance, a word such as 'uncle' can be translated to 'akkak' if it is a father's brother, 'angak' if it is a mother's brother, or 'ningaaq' if it is the spouse of a paternal or maternal aunt (Ilinniusiorfik [Dictionary], 2010).

Wilson (2008) additionally highlighted how "Indigenous epistemology is our cultures, our worldviews, our times, our languages, our histories, our spiritualities and our places in the cosmos. Indigenous epistemology is our systems of knowledge in their context, or in relationship" (p.74). In my particular case, it connected by honouring my Taíno culture when I reflected on the First Nations, Métis, and Inuit experience. As addressed in Chapter One, my lived-in experience has woven the two, and therefore neither one can be compartmentalized. My experience was unlike that of a kalaallit woman in Greenland or a Taíno woman in Borikén. It was that of a Taíno in Greenland who was determined to contribute to decolonization because "If Indigenous research is to have decolonizing aspirations, it must make one think deeply, feel strongly. It ought to unsettle" (Kovach, 2016, p.217). Such as the unsettling reverberations I witnessed as a child when my parents refused to heed the school administration's suggestion to cease speaking Spanish and protected my right to speak my mother tongue. Another essential requirement when applying Indigenous methodologies was that of demonstrating a capacity to be vulnerable or exploring our uniqueness, which for me was again that of a Taíno studying First Nations, Métis, and Inuit peoples, and what sets us apart as individuals, as well as, as Kovach (2016) states "a desire for restitution, and an opening to awakenings" (p. 2016).

Growing Seeds of Indigenous Axiology with Caguana

Atabey manifests as Caguana when representing the spirit of love. It was then only appropriate that it was attributed to the axiological component. If "the process must be done in a good way" (Kovach, 2019), then what better way than with love? Approaching the analysis with Caguana ensures that it is being done in good faith, taking an ethically sound approach. In addition to the loving, fitting approach of Caguana, from a spiritual standpoint, it is an appropriate metaphor given its physical representation in my island. In Puerto Rico, Caguana is

additionally respected as a sacred, ceremonial site. Like many places in this world that hold sacred value for Indigenous people, it has been under threat:

> The Taíno consistently fight to preserve the Caguana site, but they are faced with challenges to their existence. Archaeologists as well as state and federal government officials tell them that they no longer exist, despite recent DNA testing that indicates 61 percent of the Puerto Rican population has Taíno mitochondria. ("Caguana – Puerto Rico," 2007)

It seemed appropriate as an axiological metaphor of Indigenous values for Caguana to be a physical site representing the struggle of the Taíno people. Caguana as axiology is an empowering, reaffirming concept when thinking of how "The activist struggle is to defend, protect, enable and facilitate the self-determination of indigenous peoples over themselves in states and in the global arena where they have little power" (Smith, 2012, p. 221). The process should reflect integrity, but it *must* reflect integrity if it is to be embraced by Indigenous peoples, given the historical mistrust that has been created due to long-standing, unethical practices that have been so detrimental to so many. This process comes back to standpoint theory since, as MacGill (2016) contended, it is the lens that sheds light on the standpoint of those treated as inferior, on how hegemony functions, and on white privilege. MacGill (2016) furthermore asserted that "Understanding the "view from below" provides insight into how indirect discrimination operates in education. In particular, the "privilege of ignorance"…that operates through the absence of recognition of multiple divergent voices" (p. 242).

The ethics of Indigenous peoples could be quite dissonant to a reader trying to understand from a Eurocentric perspective. In a journal article that discussed core values from a pedagogical viewpoint, the following seeds were selected as being elements of value:

> a' dzii ayama' guunu, viewed as the essential trait of giving from the heart; weeka' dza, referring to Native language abilities; dzii guutuni, referring to knowledge and more specifically, cultural knowledge; and kaam' asruni, or the ability to create with the hands, as in traditional art. Although there is no word for giftedness in Keres, terms used to describe community members with unique cultural abilities, traits, or talents were significant in the Pueblo value system. (Huaman, 2019, p. 420)

It was important to echo that the process of learning these values and honouring them are seeds intrinsically rooted, in the particular case above, to the Pueblo Indigenous peoples. As an Indigenous researcher, I knew I had a responsibility to take into account Indigenous axiology before attempting to draw any conclusions, which thus echoed the point I raised in Chapter Three, by Biermann and Townsend-Cross (2008) on how ideally, "the first part of any subject usually consists of active unlearning, of collapsing the barriers that have been erected in the way of true, liberating education" (p.150). So, in my mind, I had a responsibility to the Indigenous people whose painstaking work I analyzed to ensure that my conclusions were in cognitive consonance with Indigenous axiology. As I saw it, being in cautious, respectful reaction to the understanding that "The language of ethics coming from Indigenous Peoples, scholars, and from the communities, indicates that the interpretation of ethics in one society may not necessarily be the ethics of another with a different worldview" (Ermine et al., 2004, p. 22). We must tend to what we plant and be respectful of the seeds being planted by our neighbours because we are growing the garden together.

Guabancex as Methodology

To consider the manifestation of Atabey as Guabancex was by far the most suitable of all the metaphoric framings discussed. Not only did it reflect the holistic ontology of Atabey and the

fertile nurturing epistemology, but it made no qualms or apologies about the procedures that should be followed. If something is to run parallel to the concept of disrupting hegemonic and binary Western knowledge, what could be more appropriate than Guabancex? "The supreme storm deity of the ancient Taíno people…believed to be responsible for the onset of all violent storms" (Allen, 2017). A storm, by definition, is a disruptor. It rattles what is in place, in this case, Western knowledge systems, and at times even tears away what has been standing and believed to have been firmly anchored. In its most visceral state, a storm clears everything except the roots and raw earth from which we came. "Guabancex is chaos incarnate; yet, her power was not seen as merely a destructive force of death, but part of a transformational cycle leading to new life and balance" (González, 2018, para. 4). How can Guabancex take the Taíno where we need to go in academia? "Increasingly, as communities heal from the colonial interruption and experience a cultural renaissance, the desire for proficiency in mainstream domains…is a strategy to build capacity as a means to protect culture" (Kovach, 2010, p. 86). Following the logic of Guabancex as methodology, entailed a prioritization of studying Indigenous leadership and "holding sacred the covenant that decisions are often made by a community of people, not an individual" (Ah Nee-Benham & Stein, 2003).

The above-discussed scenario was similarly the case here in Canada. The focus on community is critical; "improved learning is not achieved by identifying individual successes, as is often reported among Canadians. In the case of Aboriginal peoples, successes in learning are intimately tied to the overall community orientations and collective well-being demonstrated from the applications of their learning" (Battiste et al., 2016, p.28). Collective healing was and still is, at heart, and standpoint theory sustains the perspective that "Kinship ties, obligatory practices and roles within extended family models of care are understood as reciprocated

responsibilities between siblings, parents, aunties and uncles and students. Engaging with reciprocity is an enactment of obligatory practice" (MacGill, 2016, p. 240).

Kasibahagua's fertile womb has birthed many perspectives in my work. To embrace Guabancex as methodology disrupted the expectations and cleared the path to make room for the growth that needs to occur. Caguana's spirit of love was the axiology that could ensure a sense of trust in research and confidence in the educators trying to enact change. The nurturer as epistemology could ensure that it will carry on from generations past to generations to come. Atabey as ontology protects everything within her, with her all-encompassing power, which disrupted the Western hegemony and revealed that there were choices out there for the making and the taking and the assumptions made by the status quo no longer have to be the norm. That trust in the power of diversity holds the answer. A perspective very eloquently argued by Freire (2000). He called for an answer which society cannot overlook and a truth that needs to be faced by both the oppressor and the oppressed:

> The truth is, however, that the oppressed are not "marginals," are not people living "outside" society. They have always been "inside"—inside the structure which made them "beings for others." The solution is not to "integrate" them into the structure of oppression, but to transform that structure so that they can become "beings for themselves." (Freire, 2000, p. 74)

In my mind, as I reflected on one of my underlying questions (see Chapter Two), the deities meet to sustain us when Kasibahagua calls for a particular set of actions, while Sassuma Arnaa calls for us to be mindful of the mind, body, soul and spirit, not just our own, but likewise that of the sentient beings around us. A mindset conveyed through the work of Jessen Williamson (2011):

> timikkut, tarnikkut, anersaakkullu were mentioned to us at times when life-altering events occurred. We would be told 'silattorsarit' – "expand your purview" – and we were to use these three elements to expand our intellect. Each component was a consideration in acquiring valuable knowledge; whether physical or spiritual, real or intangible, and given the interconnectedness and valuable qualities of all of creation, all aspects of life are important. Even though we never quite understood these abstractions, our parents and grandparents encouraged us to always be mindful of them. (p. 62)

Just as Sassuma Arnaa retracts her bounty when human beings do not look after it (Jessen Williamson, 2021, personal account), we must be mindful of taking the necessary courses of action toward a paradigm shift to ensure we are respectfully looking after this bounty; the mind, body, soul and spirit of the Indigenous youth shaped by the education system.

For me, as a woman with Taíno roots, in the world of academia, the metaphoric framing of Atabey was a gift of sight, welcoming me to see the world with pride for my heritage; pride at the front and center of my Taíno home, with my Indigenous neighbours across the globe; pride for taking a stance and saying, 'it is time for a change.' It is time to bring forth our conceptual frameworks to the table with respect and admiration for who we are, where we've been and where we will take academia in the future. As Foucault asserted, "We have to know the historical conditions that motivate our conceptualization. We need a historical awareness of our present circumstance" (Foucault et al., 2000, p.327). It is such an awareness that can let us harvest the rewards, which I will address next.

Harvesting

I am thankful for the seeds I've been given to sow in these interwoven patches of Indigenous methodology, Indigenous epistemology, and Indigenous axiology. I have watered

these to the best of my ability with seeds from Indigenous knowledge, nourished with the sustaining water of Indigenous paradigms. My reverberations are the seedlings of understanding that are beginning to sprout in my heart and mind. Through my analysis, I intended to attest to; first, the urgency of applying Indigenous paradigms; second, to put Indigenous voices at the forefront of Indigenous education; third, highlight innovative ways of involving communities and elders in the teaching of traditions; fourth, demonstrate why it is so important to employ a relational approach to develop meaningful connections between teachers and their Indigenous students and their communities; and finally, create a new vision for curricula that makes room for spirituality and for Indigenous values, which should be honoured and recognized for their unique value, and not 'covered' with a pan-Indigenous blanket. Furthermore, standpoint theory can help educators understand that "Indigenous knowledges and Indigenous pedagogy are diverse and have their own sets of performativity and are underpinned by an Indigenous ethics of care that is local and specific to communities" (MacGill, 2016, p. 240).

All these seeds I have endeavoured to water in the three patches made me consider how many aspects I could explore within my primary research question (see Chapter Two) to highlight the possibilities that exist to reveal a genuine change for the better. Particularly when it comes to non-Indigenous teacher education and its impact on the truancy levels of First Nations, Métis, and Inuit youths. The seeds were many, and it was a valuable task to sift through them and find the ones that had the potential to grow strongest, since every single one I tended to in my research journey made these patches connect more strongly with one another, as they grew exponentially, with the shining light of standpoint theory. The roots may have been ripped, but the seeds are getting replanted with continued research. They will grow deep and sturdy and will no longer be contained in a pot of colonialism. They will proliferate freely, as the Creator

intended. I will proceed to explain how it all intersects with the curricula and curricular resources I examined.

Chapter Five: A Non-Empirical Approach and its Interpretations

With this chapter, I intend to bring all the elements discussed up to now to fruition. I have provided my positionality, mindset, and support from the existing literature from which to proceed to examine the curricula and curricular resources. My positionality, combined with the research questions I posed, the methodology, and literature review, will, I hope, lend a sharp lens for analyzing the curricula and curricular documents. Such a lens could allow non-Indigenous educators to gain valuable insight promoting broader reasoning for a paradigm shift. I plan to bring forth to the table examples that ground the discussion with the necessary context, followed by deliberation about how I saw it all come together and how it can come together for others in an ethically sound manner (see Appendix).

Indigenous at the Forefront

Having built relations with Inuit youth, the application of Indigenous paradigms seems essential so that each one is comfortable with those who have the privilege of nurturing the knowledge of every single young person, in my opinion. A kind of thinking reflected in the growing seeds of Indigenous methodology with Atabey as it promotes inclusivity and is beneficial in nature to any Indigenous youth. I will elaborate on the non-empirical approach in the analysis to connect my positionality, methodology, and themes that emerged in the literature review. I analyzed many curricular documents such as *Indigenous Knowledge and Cultural Weather Perspectives* (Wright et al., 2007) and the *Aboriginal Curriculum Integration* Project (n/d) to select a few that are promising for their unique approach to cultivating resilience among Indigenous youths.

Analysis of Resources for Resilience and Reduction of Truancy

I felt it was essential to select curricula that First Nations, Métis, and Inuit educators and communities have meticulously crafted, to present a viable analysis of the power of Indigenous knowledge available to educators. These resources should allow teachers to facilitate a learning experience connecting with students at great depth. In my estimate, it would be beyond what can be reached when applying Western pedagogy. Teaching Indigenous knowledge can feel unfamiliar for non-Indigenous educators; as Charlene Bearhead, the Education Lead at the National Centre for Truth and Reconciliation (NCTR), pointed out:

> Remember that First Nations, Métis and Inuit kids were in residential schools and were taught that their ways were less than, [while] non-Indigenous kids were also taught [and shown] that First Nations, Métis and Inuit Peoples were less than …that silence has kept people apart… We all have a responsibility to teach the truth… It's one of the things we can all do… many teachers are afraid of getting it wrong, fear doing something disrespectful or inappropriate, or feel that they don't have the right to teach about topics like residential schools…We teach about the Japanese internment but we do not have Japanese heritage… [Or about the] Holocaust, but we may not be Jewish. (WE Learn Together, 2016, p. 5)

But creating awareness is not just about teaching sensitive topics. Holistic knowledge stems from making sure educators are teaching from a place of consciousness, which takes me back to the value of asset-based pedagogy since there is a strong possibility "that high levels of critical awareness are consistent with cultural teaching practices because they reflect an understanding of the importance of leveraging students' culture in a setting that too often tends to be devoid of historically marginalized students' lives" (López, 2017, p. 205). Educators need to realize that

Indigenous youths can carve out successes on their terms and in their languages and dialects. An example of such a realization was in an article written by Gøthche (2021) in the Danish newspaper *Information*, which addressed how young people in Greenland needed to be seen by the primarily Danish teachers for the success that they are achieving on their premises. Some years ago, she was invited to introduce Greenlandic culture for a group of young Danes in the Danish department of Junior Chamber International, an organization of young leaders. As they worded it, the young Danes "wanted to inspire kalaallit youth to follow their entrepreneurial and leadership path;" however, the young kalaallit she introduced were not whom they expected. One had the largest publishing firm in Greenland. Another had the only professional diving business; one was a communications leader in Greenland's largest municipality; the last was the head of the art museum in the capital. Educators need to be mindful of the paradigm shift that is occurring, and that success can and does happen to Indigenous youths on their terms.

I selected the following curricula and curricular resources because each stood out for the culturally appropriate ways in which the essence of promoting robust Indigenous pedagogies was significant: Inuuqatigiit Curriculum (Northwest Territories. Department of Education, Culture Employment, 1996), which I will address as "Inuuqatigiit," Dene Kede Curriculum Teacher's Resource Manual (Northwest Territories Education, Culture and Employment,1993), which I will address as "Dene Kede," Full Circle: First Nations, Métis, and Inuit Ways of Knowing (Ontario Secondary School Teachers' Federation, 2012), which I will address as "Full Circle," WE Learn Together (2016), and Four Directions Teachings (2012).

Reflecting on the underlying questions

What is standpoint theory, and how can it be applied to explore how culturally relevant curricula and curricular resources aim to foster resilience among First Nations, Métis, and Inuit youths?

&

How did Kasibahagua meet Sassuma Arnaa?

My intention with this section is to elucidate its application opportunities by exploring these culturally relevant curricula and curricular resources and how it intricately ties to how Kasibahagua met Sassuma Arnaa. A resounding answer comes from the construction of knowledge reliant on Indigenous ways of knowing. The reason being that when knowledge is constructed with the underlying purpose of grounding Indigenous values, its foundation is going to emerge in a way that challenges Western constructs. When your goal is to grow a splendid sequoia tree, you begin by harvesting and germinating sequoia seedlings. Applying standpoint theory planted the seeds that helped Kasibahagua meet Sassuma Arnaa by nourishing the Indigenous standpoint. This section of my analysis explains the genuine and grounded relationship of the two underlying questions and the critical answers that the data exposed. I will elaborate on how my findings revolve around the construction of knowledge, process and assessment, procurement and sharing of experience, and reshaping the face of future leaders through representation. I will elucidate these answers and provide insight into the paradigm shift conveyed through these underlying questions.

Construction of knowledge. With Four Directions Teachings (2012), the learnings delivered through oral tradition provided a level of accessibility and authenticity that can help educators facilitate a holistic approach from those most qualified to dispense the knowledge in the form of education. The accessibility discussed supports standpoint theory, which, as Ardill

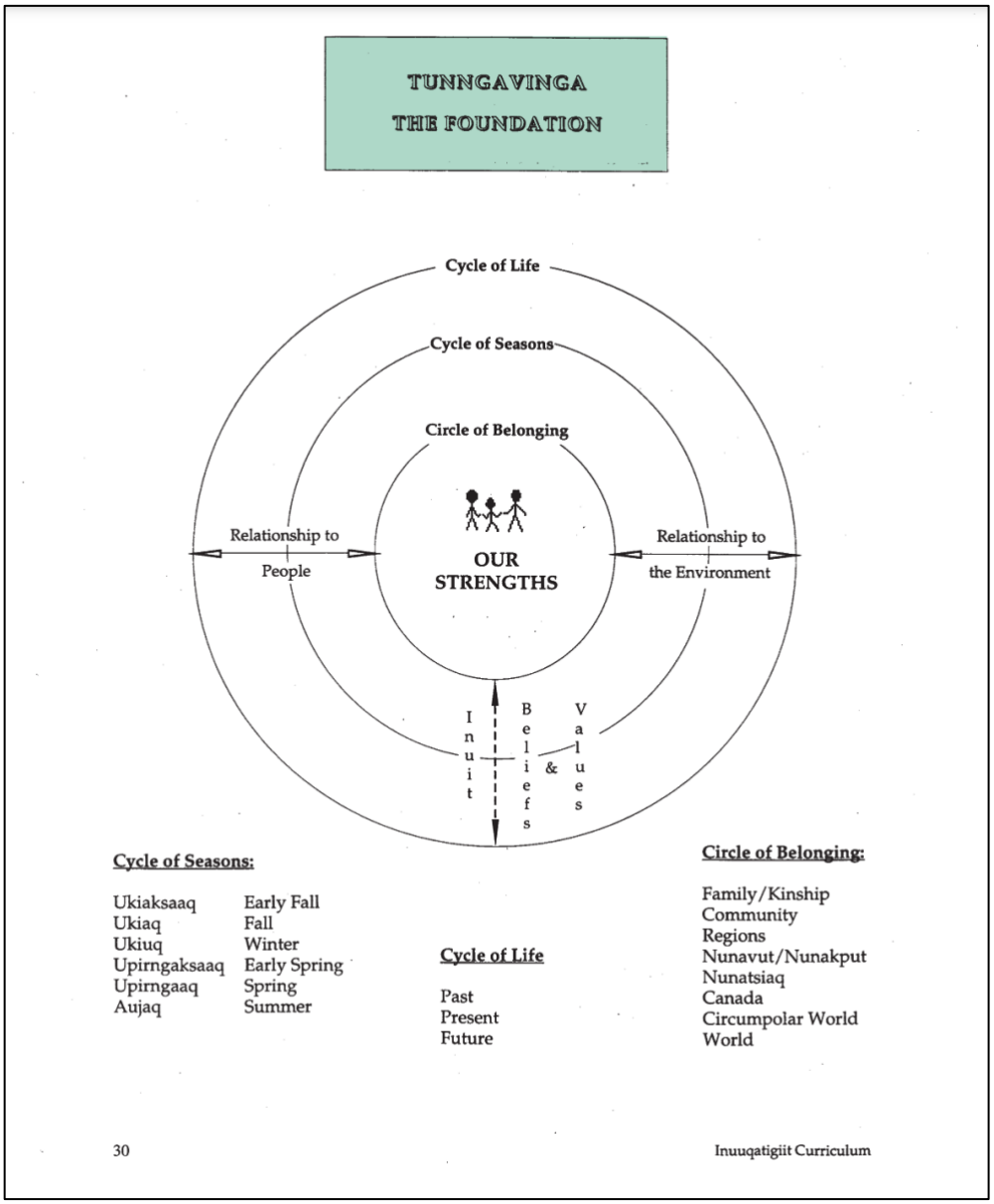
(2013) reminded us, should be "understood in an attempt to address power" (p. 332) by addressing the potential problem of lack of Indigenous knowledge of some educators:

> [M]any non-Indigenous teachers are ignorant about Indigenous histories, politics and knowledge. This is deeply problematic when teachers refrain gingerly from not teaching in these areas. Standpoint theory offers a trajectory out of this problematic location as it relies on individuals starting from their own position (histories, politics and narratives) in order to understand those from which they do not belong. (MacGill, 2016, p. 243)

In contrast to the above reality, the Inuuqatigiit (1996) curriculum document delivered a holistic approach to the construction of knowledge that is deliberate in developing a strong sense of understanding of Inuit values, attitudes and beliefs. The curriculum developers additionally worked toward creating a connection to the environment and one another across time and space. Unlike some curricula, which follow a more Western method of organizing material about Western academic subjects, Inuuqatigiit reflects standpoint theory by embracing a construction of knowledge that values Inuit in academia. Thus, the creators of Inuuqatigiit (1996) crafted the curriculum reflecting Tunngavinga (see Table 1), the foundation based on the circle of belonging, and cycles of life and seasons. As posed by Foley (2003), "Indigenous epistemological approaches in an Indigenous standpoint enables knowledge to be recorded for the community" (p. 50). Tunngavinga ensures knowledge remains strong in the Inuit community.

Table 5.1

Tunngavinga- The Foundation



Note. From Northwest Territories. Department of Education, Culture Employment 1996 (p. 30). *Inuuqatigiit: The curriculum from the Inuit perspective.* Northwest Territories, Education, Culture and Employment. http://inuuqatigiit.ca/wp-content/uploads/2018/03/Part1_InuuqatigiitCurriculum.pdf

Just as Inuuqatigiit (1996) curriculum creators applied Inuit philosophy into *Tunngavinga*, through which they revealed the relationships between people, the environment, and Inuit beliefs and values (p.30), educators, in general, need to entice students with more than just constructing academic writing focused on Western knowledge reproduction (Freire, 2000). As Jessen Williamson (2014) discussed her sense of fulfillment in her poetry:

> In Indigenous communities, scholarly text has been accused of being reductionist and static in presenting Indigenous knowledge. My poetry writing is dynamic, emerging from deep energy, out of a creation process that indeed lifts my spirit up. I feel nourished and my soul feels the dance consisting of words that come with no warning, urging me to express the notion in the two languages that best describe my being. (p.143)

An example of the powerful poetry of Jessen Williamson is the poem that she created in 2020 and was invited to read by the Canadian Federal Government in honour of Indigenous Day:

Dances with the Universe

Aah, dancing the rhythm
of the universe
is the very best
for inner spirit
as it realizes
the ancestral promise
of universal truth.

To belong to the name,

traversing the earth

the stars, the rivers

through the name – the soul

which in the long run

goes back home

to the cosmic powers.

Ooh, the dancing of assimilation

So dissonant to the rhythm

Of the universe

As it pretends the powers

Disguised in human greed

And narcissistic tendencies

To undo the

The rhythm of the universe (Jessen Williamson, 2020)

Her poetry nourishment is a return to the importance of connection to something deeper. It is reminiscent of how Inuuqatigiit (2016) and Dene Kede (1993) follow an Indigenous organizational structure that promotes a greater connection to the peoples in question, the land, and the Indigenous knowledge. Each of the documents appeals to educators within Indigenous communities. Each document can uniquely aid Western educators to start making best possible connections, and each educator may have to shift the paradigm from Western knowledge and pedagogical process toward Indigenous ways of knowing, enabling, in my estimate, the meeting

between Kasibahagua and Sassuma Arnaa (see Chapter Two) and fostering the Indigenous standpoint mentioned in Chapter Four.

The inherent values in Inuuqatigiit (1996) and Dene Kede (1993) challenge the Western ideals of individuality, as "[t]he whole camp or community took part in rearing a child. Parents had clear expectations for the child, preparing them for their future responsibilities and everyone knew these expectations" (Inuuqatigiit, 1996, p.11). I draw a natural parallel from my methodology of Atabey manifesting as the storm-disruptor, Guabancex – by rattling Western knowledge systems focused on directing the nature, mindset and activities of children and by choosing to acknowledge community importance; in this case, meeting Sassuma Arnaa. I believe it can represent a holistic encounter between the mother of the earth and the mother of the sea, honouring Indigenous knowledge systems and for the two deities to unite in an effort to make education meaningful in their own cultural contexts.

Having read and re-read Inuuqatigiit (1996) and reflecting upon it, I sense I can start listening to narratives of storied lives of Inuit youths and see how enriched the narratives would be applying the holistic framework of "timikkut" (the body), "tarnikkut" (the name/soul), "anersaakkullu" (the spirit). These were elucidated by the kalaaleq scholar Jessen Williamson (2011), who addressed in her research how "the triadic structure is to be applied to all life; it is the framework of Inuit knowledge" (p. 62). This triadic structure is a key to open doors that Western systems are inclined to leave shut. Jessen Williamson (2011) elaborated on said structure when she explained that this:

> framework allows individuals to explore dreams and find meaning in them. In the "Western" world, dreams are not necessarily appreciated as having the ability to construct meaning. They are rarely seen as guiding one through life. In Greenland and in the Inuit

> world, however, dreams are like missing pieces in a puzzle; they are additional components to the mundane realities of daily life. (p. 149)

In my mind, these revelations and perspectives insufficiently voiced in education are at heart whereby a unique explanation and discussion can be made on standpoint theory. In that regard, Moreton-Robinson (2013) argued that the self-determination of Indigenous people "informs our standpoint as embodied socio-cultural and historically situated subjects of knowledge" (p. 335). To me, self-determination, as discussed here, is what I argue standpoint theory can contribute by teaching non-Indigenous educators to recognize the power Indigenous youths and communities hold and how recognition and willingness to collaborate can be powerful agents to reduce truancy and foster resilience.

As I see it, the holistic approach resonates with holistic care, places, peoples, and spirits, each woven together into holistic matter. Such a realization surely requires the non-Indigenous educators to think and re-evaluate the Western knowledge system from which education, in general, originates. Such a process initiates development of a paradigm shift, at minimum, to consider that rearing a child is not solely the responsibility of the parents. In the case of Inuuqatigiit (1996), the approach works to reinforce the individual's identity as part of something greater than themselves. As I see it, it gives Inuit youth a purpose by having expectations from the community, not just their immediate family, while remaining mindful of spirits.

Another difference rests in the fact that "Inuit felt that to create curiosity in a child about certain areas of life before they were old enough to understand would shock the child into maturity before the mind and soul was ready" (Inuuqatigiit, 1996, p.11). It has been my lived experience that having an open discussion about what I will teach is essential when it comes to challenging subjects. Allowing students to pursue an alternative topic, if the planned topic is too

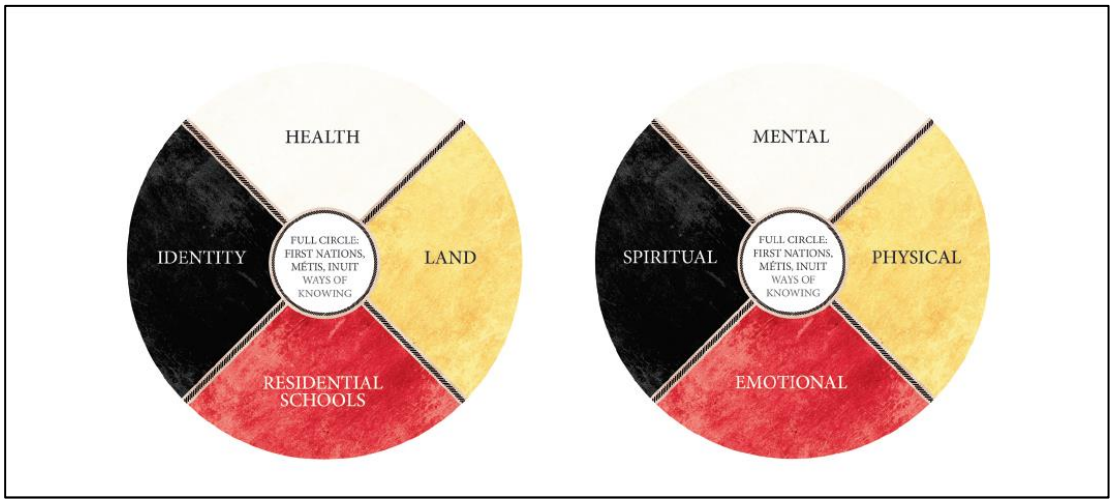
sensitive, shows honour and respect for each of their storied lives. Allowing students to have a more significant say in their schoolwork fosters a better relationship than expecting participation at all costs in all subjects I may have decided to teach. The better the relationship between teachers, students, their family, and the community, the easier it is to gauge the appropriateness and level of sensitivity of a topic; furthermore, the greater the likelihood that a student will not be truant to avoid discussing an uncomfortable or painful topic. As Birioukov (2016) echoes, "school refusal literature, across several countries tends to overlook wider contextual factors, such as poverty, when analyzing the causes and solutions to absenteeism" (p. 349). Educators need to keep their finger on the pulse of what each youngster is experiencing in their life if each is to motivate the individual to return day after day to a respectful and welcoming educational environment.

Full Circle (2012) provided another rich answer to my underlying question, and the document below rendered a construction of knowledge used in the application of the Medicine Wheel. The Medicine Wheel was used as a holistic foundation (see Figure 3) for Indigenous peoples to make unique, cultural or otherwise, interpretations. The curriculum designers acknowledged that:

> The process of dividing the circle into four areas or quadrants is not necessarily common to all Aboriginal groups, but the writers used this method to organize the material. This resource is divided into four thematic areas: identity, health, Residential Schools and land and each of these themes has up to ten lessons within it. (Full Circle, 2012, p.3)

Figure 5.3

Organization of Themes Using the Medicine Wheel



Note. From Ontario Secondary School Teachers' Federation, 2012 (p.4). *Full Circle: First Nations, Métis, and Inuit Ways of Knowing*. Copyright 2012 by OSSTF/FEESO.

To outline lesson plans in a classroom setting, the developers tried to balance Western pedagogical practices to run alongside Indigenous perspectives by using "see it, feel it, know it, and do it" as concepts to guide holistic teaching" (Full Circle, 2012, p.5). The first, the "See it" component, is meant to entice the curiosity of youths toward the upcoming topic. The second, the "Feel it" component, is intended to motivate youngsters to access the subject at an emotional level and find a powerful means to ponder their feelings. The third, the "Know it" component, allows youths to delve deeply into the topic, thus acquiring greater understanding. Fourth of all, the *Do it* component lets youths showcase their learning through a task or an activity (Full Circle, 2012, p.5). The components required by Full Circle (2012) for creating knowledge remind me of my questions in Chapter Two on how Kasibahagua meets Sassuma Arnaa. As I see it, Kasibahagua nourishes Indigenous youths through the use of the Medicine Wheel. Sassuma Arnaa is met through the emotional connection of the "Feel it" and "Know it" components which

prioritize the nourishment of the spiritual and cultural elements each Indigenous youngster should be entitled to develop. For educators, the Medicine Wheel application appears to be easy to run in conjunction with Western curricula, given its organizational pattern. The Full Circle (2012) curriculum designers ensured that even in a school environment with a medley of young Indigenous individuals from many different backgrounds, there is still a path toward developing a strong sense of identity and pride in Indigeneity.

The developers methodically crafted a list of best practices (see Table 2) that educators need to carefully consider ensuring they integrate the lessons in the most respectful manner possible.

Table 5.2

BEST PRACTICES FOR INTEGRATING *FULL CIRCLE: FIRST NATIONS, MÉTIS AND INUIT WAYS OF KNOWING* IN THE CLASSROOM

Do	Don't
• Do find ways to incorporate these lessons in subjects other than Native Studies, social sciences and history	• Don't make inclusion at a level that it appears to be "tokenism"
• Do use the lessons to deconstruct biases and stereotypes	• Don't overuse generalizations and generic references
• Do acknowledge the diversity among First Nations, Métis and Inuit peoples	• Don't make assumptions that the experience, histories, culture, and perspectives of all First Nations, Métis and Inuit peoples are the same
• Do use specific names of nations (eg. Mohawk) instead of general terms like Aboriginal, where the context calls for specificity	• Don't use the term "Indian" except where it refers to a historical term such as the "Indian Act"
• Do acknowledge the contributions of Aboriginal people to society both historically and today	• Don't present Aboriginal people and cultures as belonging to the past
• Do challenge the use of stereotypical phrases, materials, images	• Don't accept derogatory terms such as squaw, brave, savages, drunken Indian
• Do invite an Aboriginal Elder to conduct an Aboriginal ceremony or invite Aboriginal artists and storytellers into your class	• Don't assume an Aboriginal student is an "expert" in Aboriginal culture just because (s)he self-identifies as Aboriginal
• Do be respectful of the cultural traditions, teachings and art forms of Aboriginal people	• Don't create masks, dreamcatchers or other sacred objects except in the presence of an Aboriginal teacher or Elder

Note. From Ontario Secondary School Teachers' Federation, 2012 (p. 7). *Full Circle: First Nations, Métis, and Inuit Ways of Knowing*. Copyright 2012 by OSSTF/FEESO.

In a diverse classroom environment, recommendations such as "Do acknowledge the diversity among First Nations, Métis, and Inuit peoples" (Full Circle, 2012, p.7) should be acted upon in greater depth. Educators ought to do their best to form lessons that intimately connect to the particular peoples represented within their classrooms.

Process and assessment. The second approach that is likewise particularly good for building a strong sense of identity is to construct culturally relevant lessons that are process-oriented because:

> People know that the process of learning or doing something is as important as the end product. Young girls learning to sew a kamik [Inuit boots] will make mistakes and experience frustration. As they continue to try, sewing a kamik will become easier. If they had been critiqued only on the end product on their first try, what would it have meant to them? Similarly, a test or an exam should not summarize the total ability of a child. (Inuuqatigiit Curriculum, 1996, p.24)

WE Learn Together (2016) echoed the efforts of Inuuqatigiit (1996) in deliberations on culturally relevant approaches to educating through process. It reflects standpoint theory, as explained in Chapter Four, elaborating the theory on knowledge creation for Indigenous peoples, when showing elementary grades educators how they can tackle math lessons by teaching youths to "explore and identify different types of patterns through the examination of the Métis sash" (WE Learn Together, 2016, p. 21). Métis sash work entices individuals to create their own patterns or have a local expert demonstrate sash weaving, thus showing viable alternatives to Western pedagogies. This lesson reminded me of my grant work with Dr. Lipka on ethnomathematics, and the delight I felt realizing that such work was possible. A move toward the above described culturally mindful formative assessment path and farther away from a

summative one aligned well with my underlying questions and with Guabancex disrupting Western knowledge systems. A move that favours being more equitable and considerate to possible challenges, especially those such as an assessment primarily weighed by mastery of the English language or Western methods of developing mathematical knowledge.

Dene Kede (1993) answered my underlying questions through the recommended approach to learner assessment which reflected cognizance of the value of cultural relevance and of how, as cited in MacGill (2016), "the dearth of assessment on Indigenous knowledges further signifies what knowledge is valued and what knowledges are made absent. Assessment signifies what knowledge is to be retained and therefore valued" (p. 241). Such cognizance is, again, well-demonstrated. For the Dene Kede (1993) curriculum designers, the application of standpoint theory rests in the stipulation that "The Dene Classroom Assistant/Dene Language Specialists should be members of the community" (Dene Kede, 1993, p. 9). The curriculum designers recognized that "Dene Classroom Assistants are a valuable resource for a Dene Kede program. Being from the community, they know of potential resource people, they often have Dene skills that they can teach, and they often live from a Dene perspective" (Dene Kede, 1993, p. 9). The designers provided a connection that reinforces cultural relevance and, in turn, a stronger Dene identity, and in relation to my research quest, the document entices motivation to attend school.

Procurement and sharing of experience. The following is my response to my underlying questions that rest with the perspective of Dene teachers. They are responsible for "the gathering of information from the elders who have a connection with the past [and] they must act as leaders in getting the community involved again in the teaching of Dene perspectives and knowledge" (Dene Kede,1993, p. 10). The Dene Kede (1993) designers stipulated that the teachers "will be Dene and, preferably, from the community of the school. Where qualified Dene

teachers are not available, a language/culture instructor or classroom assistant will be the Dene Kede program teacher" (Dene Kede, 1993, p. 10). These words speak to the value of nurturing community members to become educators who could pass on Indigenous values and beliefs and ensure the continuity necessary for individuals to form lasting bonds to the school, the land, and the community. Together with elders, local educators are encouraged to foster a holistic sense of belonging that might be more inclined to motivate youngsters to succeed in school to serve their communities, not merely to succeed in school to move away. In the particular case below:

> The Dene teacher develops thematic units and lesson plans with the help of community resource people and/or with the help of other Dene teachers in the school. The Dene teacher integrates subject area skills and knowledge with the cultural experiences and themes of the Dene Kede program. (Dene Kede, 1993, p. 10)

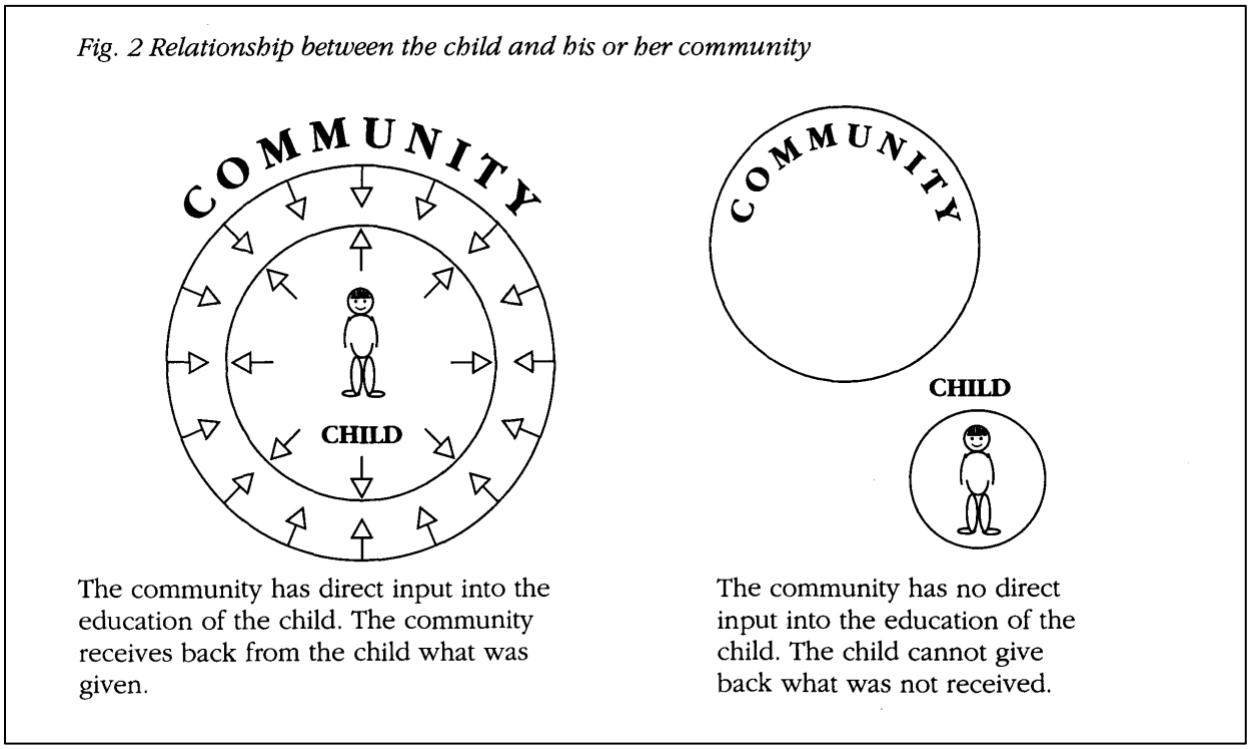
Community involvement addresses the potential challenge I had brought up earlier regarding Western educators who are challenged by having the good intention of wanting but not knowing how to deliver an Indigenous context. Collaboration speaks to a challenge that goes back to Martin et al. (2017), who argued that most academics have minimal awareness of cultural knowledge, which drives the point of a need for working with Indigenous knowledge keepers. When teachers remain united in their common goal to educate Indigenous youths, echoing Caguana and care, each will be motivated by carrying on in good faith. Each will become sufficiently ethically aware of supporting the necessary disruption of Guabancex and promote the Indigenous knowledge systems.

Another group to provide answers to my underlying questions was the Community Education Committee, who, among many things, "provides feedback to the parents about the Dene Kede Program at monthly meetings…[and] also provides feedback to the school from the

community about the Dene Kede Program" (Dene Kede,1993, p. 11). A monthly meeting arrangement such as the one discussed above, facilitates a reliable way to ensure the community is actively engaged in educating the youngest members on an ongoing basis, thus nourishing a reciprocal relationship of sharing and procuring experiences between educators, learners and the community. The Community Education committee furthermore "supports educational activities outside the school. By supporting adult education classes which teach language and culture, the Community Education Committee can indirectly support Dene Kede in the school" (Dene Kede, 1993, p. 11). Acquiring language may encourage the community to form a stronger bond with the educators, assuming the latter acquired the language. Offering language and culture classes can reinforce the Dene identity. However, exposing non-Indigenous educators and the community to an educational paradigm shift that values Indigenous knowledge may affect how parents and guardians of Indigenous youths feel about their youngsters receiving said education and potentially positively impact attendance; knowledge comes full circle. Expanding the purview of Western educators helps Kasibahagua meet Sassuma Arnaa with the care I wanted to materialize in Chapter Two. It comes back to the importance of standpoint theory and the supporting argument by Lugones (1987), "Only when we have travelled to each other's "worlds" are we fully subjects to each other" (p.17). Such travel was well created by the curriculum designers in addressing the importance of community (See Figure 4) in Dene Kede (1993). It represents a holistic relationship between the child and their community making both feel seen and respected.

Figure 5.4

Importance of Community



Note. Source Northwest Territories Education, Culture and Employment, 1993 (p. 13). *Dene Kede Curriculum Teacher's Resource Manual*. https://www.ece.gov.nt.ca/sites/ece/files/resources/dene_kede_k-6_teacher_resource_manual.pdf

Similar to the primacy of experiences found in Inuuqatigiit (1996), Dene Kede (1993) employs "a methodology based on the use of *Key Cultural Experiences*… [such as] camping, hunting caribou, feasting, picking berries, hearing a story from an elder, attending a drum dance, sewing slippers, skinning and cutting up a rabbit" (p. 17). These activities are not carried out piecemeal, but in their entirety, and repeated throughout the youths' lives "enabling people to become more skilled or knowledgeable in a spiralling fashion" (Dene Kede,1993, p. 17). The above-addressed methodology echoes answers to my underlying questions in Chapter Two and

goes back to the importance of Western teachers to construct knowledge assisted by community involvement and thus resonates with Guabancex disrupting Western knowledge systems. In this case, for example, Dene educators and elders will be familiar with the skills Indigenous youths should be learning thus able to assess them from an Indigenous perspective; for another, these Dene educators and elders will be qualified to deliver the lessons in their holistic entirety since:

> A key experience may be composed of several sub-experiences or component experiences. Together, they represent a balanced Dene perspective. They include experiences dealing with a person's *Spiritual* relationships, relationships with the *Land*, relationships with other *People* and relationships with the *Self.* (Dene Kede,1993, p. 17)

An experience that does not address a holistic value would not be considered Dene (Dene Kede, 1993, p. 17); a message equally valued in Inuuqatigiit (1996) and similarly relayed by Four Directions Teachings (2012). Non-Indigenous educators would likely sense the similarities in the Dene model of *Spiralling Learning* (Dene Kede, 1993, p. 18), with the *Spiral Curriculum* of Jerome Bruner (Bruner, Taylor, and Francis, 2006), or with Lev Vygotsky's *Zone of Proximal Development,* which attested that "The child—and the rest of us, for that matter—can only imitate what is in the range of our developmental level" (Newman & Holzman, 1993, p. 53). Therefore, the curricular designers' reasoning that an experience without holistic value would not be Dene (Dene Kede, 1993) is worth considering since these similarities should help bridge the cultural gaps, as long as educators remember that they are similarities but not the same.

The construction of knowledge that decisively unites the importance of Indigenous language learning experiences is another element that stood out in the Dene Kede (1993) and Inuuqatigiit (1996). To carve a path to the rich cultural connection encouraged by standpoint

theory and facilitate a sense of belonging. In this case, and echoing standpoint theory, we should consider Smith (2012) when she highlighted the consideration of

> the term regeneration rather than revitalization to argue that a language does not die and does not need to be brought to life; rather, the generations of people who speak the language die, and the new generations need to make the language live by speaking it. (p.149)

Dene Kede (1993) curriculum developers consciously worked on nurturing new generations of Dene speakers for generations to come. The curriculum aimed to foster connections grounding the language to essential experiences crucial for retention. For individuals who speak Dene as a mother tongue, "[i]t is the key experience which defines what language should be learned and taught…The richer the language used in the context of the experiences, the more the students will be challenged with the language" (Dene Kede, 1993, p. 24). The authenticity of language learning through essential experiences surely will foster resilience by building the necessary connection to the land and others. For youths whose Dene language is a second language

> the language can be taught as a subject and then integrated with the key experience so that they are learning to use the language in the context of real experiences…The Dene Kede curriculum is primarily concerned with teaching this Dene perspective to students. If the students learn language for the purpose of engaging in cultural experiences, they benefit in two ways: They have the opportunity to use the language, not just learn it, and they get exposure to the Dene perspectives that make the language rich. (Dene Kede, 1993, p. 24)

The above reasoning aligns and supports my earlier discussion of lived experiences where I have encountered youths who asked, "What will I use this for? What does this have to do with me?" It

was a point equally raised in the recommendations by the Greenland Reconciliation Commission (Forsogningskommissionen, 2017), which, when making the case in their fifth recommendation, called for reinforcement of the Greenlandic language (p. 46) in educational institutions, promoting more Inuit voices in school environments.

The organization of key experiences (see Table 3) was well-constructed and provided vigorous integration in both models offered.

Table 5.3

Time Tabling for Dene Kede

Fig. 8 Time Tabling for Dene Kede

M	T	W	TH	F
KEY	S	S	S	S
	S	S	S	S
	S	S	S	S
	DCL	DCL	DCL	DCL
	S	S	S	S
	S	S	S	S
	S	S	S	S

Day 1 repeated each day

KEY	S	S	S	DCL	S

KEY = Key experience/Sharing experience
S = Subjects integrated thematically
DCL = Dene language and culture instruction related to key experiences

Note. Reprinted from Northwest Territories Education, Culture and Employment, 1993 (p. 26). *Dene Kede Curriculum Teacher's Resource Manual*. https://www.ece.gov.nt.ca/sites/ece/files/resources/dene_kede_k-6_teacher_resource_manual.pdf

The first entails that one "or several classes participate in a key experience which lasts the whole day. On subsequent days, the classes are given their usual subject lessons, including lessons on Dene culture and language which all relate to the key experience" (Dene Kede, 1993, p. 26). The second model centres around an activity which gets some students involved in the key

experience, while others remain "working at lessons which integrate subject skills and understandings to the key experience…The activity centred approach is ideal when the key experience can be brought to the class and where small numbers of students are preferred to large numbers" (Dene Kede, 1993, p. 26). For teachers, the first model helped provide students with the necessary context. The second model does it as well, but it would additionally allow the opportunity to work more closely with a smaller number so students would benefit from relationship building. The closer the bonds, the better the quality of a youth's support network to encourage attendance, which thus works toward answering my principal question (see Chapter Two). Integration of key experiences is likewise possible in curricula, such as WE Learn Together (2016) and Full Circle (2012).

Reshaping the face of future leaders through representation. Dene Kede (1993) and Inuuqatigiit (1996) maintained a holistic approach that was robust in its infusion of Indigenous knowledge and approaches to Indigenous pedagogies. The importance of culture was kept at the forefront and potentially helped guide individuals toward a healthy sense of identity, pride, and belonging. The curriculum designing works, I assume, to create a school environment worth participating in and worth leading. An environment that resonates with the triadic structure Jessen Williamson (2011) applied, in caring for "timikkut" (the body), "tarnikkut" (the name/soul), "anersaakkullu" (the spirit) (p. 62), goes beyond Western knowledge systems. Jessen Williamson contended, "[i]n societies based on oral tradition, storytelling is an evocative means of connecting the listener to the universe, delving deep into the past, moving deep into the future, while experiencing the story in the present" (p. 63). Meticulous care was taken to ensure an Indigenous support network for students and teachers alike. It promotes the continuity necessary for each young person to thrive, of taking action with Caguana, with allies, in good faith, and

through ethically sound means. The biggest take-away for educators would have to be an expectation of cooperative work ahead of them and not to do it alone. To an extent, it is about yielding the leadership role; meaning, that for some educators, their work will be about discarding the Western mindset of the "teacher as an omniscient figure in a position of authority" to one of the "teacher as a learner and collaborator in a community." The role of the teacher as collaborator echoes the argument of Moreton-Robinson (2013), who, as I discussed, believed "one of standpoint theory's most important contributions to knowledge production is that it exposes the spurious truth claims to impartiality of patriarchal knowledge production" (p. 333). When non-Indigenous educators steer toward Indigenous knowledge, they steer away from the power imbalance of patriarchal knowledge and toward being inclusive of matriarchal and non-gender-based knowledge, thus helping foster resilience by continuously voicing that Indigenous knowledge is essential:

> The so-called natural is always paramount in settler ideas of appropriate ways to relate, control, and allocate rights and resources that reproduce structural inequities. If we are to move beyond the reproduction of the dyadic family's scripting and privileged status, we need to understand nature differently…to rethink sex as the central organizing principle of human sociality, the human as the only important unit of relational ethics, and the white supremacist settler and other colonial cultural scripts as ethical measures of belonging. (TallBear and Wiley, 2019, para. 1-2)

Full Circle (2012) and WE Learn Together (2016), by nature of being created for a more diverse group of individuals, did not focus on the construction of resilient youth leadership via language and cultural experiences in the manner done by Inuuqatigiit (1996) and Dene Kede

(1993). That being said, Full Circle (2012) and WE Learn Together (2016) made a comprehensive effort to highlight lessons that are true for everyone and infused these with Indigenous knowledge. One example centred on a video about two Inuit youths and a Métis woman. It worked to "illustrate the universal themes of teenage angst in a quest for identity [in which the teacher will] introduce or reacquaint students with the teachings from the Seven Grandfathers (Ojibway traditions) …wisdom, love, honesty, humility, truth, bravery, and respect" (Full Circle, 2012, p.8). One of the options for assessing the learning acquired had the youngster connect one of these teachings to each of the youngsters in the video. They had to "explain why they associate the particular teaching with that young person. In the conclusion, the student must state which of the seven teachings relates to his/her own life" (Full Circle, 2012, p.8). The guidance of Guabancex and disrupting Western knowledge through the prioritization of Indigenous leadership can prompt youths to consider deep questions such as how the featured youngster made connections to their culture and the impact such cultural ties can have later on. It furthermore provided more specific examples, such as "How is Mohawk culture reflected in Teni's life? In what ways has he bridged two cultures?" (Full Circle, 2012, p.10). Addressing the tension often experienced, of trying to navigate Indigenous and Western cultures echoes the challenge faced by youths today and supports the standpoint theory (see Chapter Three) by creating new construction of knowledge that values Indigeneity. I think Full Circle (2012) opens up for a conversation on such tensions; however, one factor that needs attending is that of who will help youngsters with these questions, as it would be essential to address them with a teacher and an elder if it is to be a holistic exploration. In this instance, the gap of elder involvement could, at minimum, be addressed by a construct such as the one delivered through Four Directions Teachings (2012) which is providing knowledge directly from elders.

Full Circle (2012) likewise provided answers to my underlying question, albeit differently, as stated: "Each project in the series tackles an important social issue that is cross-curricular in nature and compels students to examine their beliefs, choices and actions" (Full Circle, 2012, p.3). Full Circle (2012) answered my question about how standpoint theory can be applied when I reflected on the explanation from Medina-Minton (2018), who saw it as a theory that "explores the communication between groups, the behaviors that manifest among the different group members due to their power locations, and the societal position that different groups occupy" (p. 440). In my mind, Full Circle (2012) filled the chasm with Indigenous knowledge in schools primarily based on Western thought, by nourishing youths with the freedom to explore their own Indigenous lived story, thus birthing power from their cultural and spiritual knowledge. In an environment consisting of multiple Indigenous groups being represented, Full Circle (2012) helps promote the shaping of future, resilient leaders by acknowledging that First Nations, Métis, and Inuit people all have their unique histories and cultures and

> that some teachings and symbols are not universally recognized by all Aboriginal people…Where possible, specific names and titles have been used to describe groups of people, however, the word "Aboriginal" has been used as a collective term to include First Nations, Métis and Inuit people as the original inhabitants of North America and their descendants. (Full Circle, 2012, p.3)

I see Full Circle (2012) being a necessarily inclusive resource, considering that "Over 220,000 people in Ontario identify themselves as Ontario First Nations. There are 133 First Nation communities across Ontario and each nation is unique in their beliefs, language and histories" (Indigenous Canada, 2021). Such a diverse population presents a fundamental need to ensure that

teachers can (as much as possible) infuse Indigenous pedagogies into the curriculum that are as inclusive as possible. Simultaneously, trying to safeguard the teachings are not misconstrued as pan-Indigenous; of working with Caguana to ensure it is handled with ethical responsibility. "Full Circle, also refers to the unending journey that many Aboriginal people find themselves on as they claim and re-claim their culture, their land, and their identity" (Full Circle, 2012, p.3); therefore, it is unifying in its purpose.

The WE Learn Together (2016) resource guide applied standpoint theory when it brought awareness to the success of ground-breaking First Nations schools when they explained how

> [l]ast year [they] visited Oskayak High School in Saskatoon. Principal Craig Schellenberg said that since the school undertook a rejuvenation project five years ago, putting a greater influence on First Nations culture in the curriculum, the graduation rate has risen to more than 60 students a year from three. (WE Learn Together, 2016, p. 39)

Educating youngsters on the changes taking place lets them know they are essential change agents—each capable of growing to be resilient leaders on their premises, without the need to assimilate. Robust support for such a mindset from the standpoint theory, as expressed by Medina-Minton (2018), stated it "explores the communication between groups, the behaviors that manifest among the different group members due to their power locations, and the societal position that different groups occupy" (p. 440). Occupying an inclusive space has the potential to yield robust outcomes toward school completion.

Another way of building leadership among the Indigenous youth is through the arts. Secondary students could approach the subject of reconciliation through music by "comparing and contrasting traditional and contemporary First Nations powwow music and Inuit throat singing, then by researching international examples of music...[to] consider the cultural

influences and significance of contemporary music and how it works toward reconciliation" (WE Learn Together, 2016, p. 16). The focus on Indigenous music may empower individuals by reinforcing that books are not the only important medium through which each can communicate. As their ancestors passed on Indigenous heritage and knowledge through oral traditions, so too can youngsters today continue seeing the value of oral traditions and address current topics through music that reflects their identity and not just what mainstream media sends out. In my mind, I see the power of Guabancex, disrupting the status quo and having individuals expressing themselves, creating music that each can relate to, in each of their languages, with their messages.

WE Learn Together (2016) delivers what they declare to provide: Guidance for educators on bridging the gap between Indigenous knowledge and Western knowledge while simultaneously keeping their eye on the global scale and empowering Indigenous youths. It allows them to see that their interests and values are worth sharing with the world because each possesses a heritage that should neither be hidden nor assimilated into Western systems.

Four Directions Teachings (2012) addressed the rationale for the lesson plans evoked by the designers. The designers brought up that these lesson plans were meant to engage youngsters regardless of whether they were in Iqaluit or Halifax; in 7th grade or 11th; furthermore, it should surpass lessons of Aboriginal culture to include core Western subjects such as science but seen from the standpoint of Aboriginal peoples (Four Directions Teacher Resource Kit, n/d). The purpose is to have youths see for themselves how current knowledge relates to wisdom bestowed by elders and many other community members, which in turn would make each youngster understand the leadership role they play and can play in the future, within their communities and elsewhere (Four Directions Teacher Resource Kit, n/d, p.7): "The goal is for the learner to see

himself or herself as having meaning and value in the world. As Aboriginal youth have long demonstrated underachievement in the scholastic arena in Canada, this is a particularly significant aim" (Four Directions Teacher Resource Kit, n/d, p.7). In my mind, the statement above answers my underlying questions regarding how to apply standpoint theory and how Kasibahagua can meet Sassuma Arnaa; additionally, the holistic connections built are supported by Teuscher and Marakova (2018), who argued, "[c]oncerning the question as to which students are at risk of low school engagement… school-related factors in particular seem to be crucial" (p.132).

The paradigm shift conveyed through the underlying questions. Foley (2003) reminded us that "an Indigenous standpoint enables knowledge to be recorded for the community, not the Academy. The participants are the owners of the knowledge, not the researcher" (p. 50), which carves an essential element in our path forward in education. In my mind, having new educators that develop a sense of comfort and understanding around it waters the seeds described in my methodology, of a nurturing foundation from which to support Indigenous youths. It is not enough to mandate inclusion if educators do not understand how, or the reasons why, they should work toward a paradigm shift. I have presented evidence through my positionality (see Chapter One). Throughout my research, I sustained why a paradigm shift can begin in each classroom with isolated gestures but cannot fully occur just on these individual efforts. Indigenous creation and ownership of knowledge for the benefit of Indigenous people support the belief that it takes a concerted effort to make a tangible change. The more awareness that is created about the benefits of Indigenous knowledge, the greater the possibility of successful implementations:

> Institutional support is required to achieve these collective goals. In order to work along this continuum, it is essential that teachers and pre-service teachers from Anglo-centric backgrounds are conscientised to racialisation and the power and politics embedded within schooling. In particular, examining one's standpoint within the contact zone of cross-cultural classroom encounters. (MacGill, 2016, p. 244)

The above argument for institutional backing aligns with my positionality and with the evidence presented to support the essential paradigm shift. It echoes the need for a broader scope of changes that educators can encourage within their school environments and with their administrators.

Indigeneity "is tied to land and place, and therefore the term *Indigenous* recognizes this connection of being from and belonging to the land" (“Indigenous Education E-Mentoring,” 2017, para. 4). To me, these words mean that Indigeneity is grounded in relationships, including relationships to the land. In the case of this research, Kasibahagua has met Sassuma Arnaa in the life journey each represents, the nurturing womb of the Earth mother and the lady down under, the Inuit sea goddess- two powers infinitely connected to sustain all that embodies life (see Chapter Four). I welcomed the reader to see empowerment and Indigenous youth resilience being nourished, as well as retention in their educational journey, from my positionality as a woman and Taíno honouring my ancestors and my lived experience as an educator of Inuit youths. Sassuma Arnaa respected my metamorphic journey with Inuit youths in the current kalaallit education system. I echoed how I saw the potential for educators to propel sea change by drawing valuable teachings from each curriculum and curricular resource. I demonstrated how each educator could come to it by drawing from the nurturing womb of Kasibahagua, which called for the birth of a particular set of actions. I showed how to achieve it by drawing from

Sassuma Arnaa, who called for us, as Jessen Williamson (2011) brought up in her triadic framework to be mindful of the mind, body, soul and spirit, and likewise of the sentient beings around us. As Wilson (2008) reminded us, "reality is in the relationship one has with the truth" (p.73). I sense that keeping our eyes wide open to the truth being lived by others is the first step toward a path of strength. I propose that we keep our eyes on the potential I have presented. As the symbol of fecundity, the womb nourishes life, and to me, it feeds possibility. Atabey appealed to me because she is the supreme goddess of the Taíno. She is "the goddess of fresh water and human fertility" (Rouse, 1992, p. 13). She manifested herself in three keyways which I applied to my methodology. I grew seeds of Indigenous ontology with Atabey first, as a nurturer or maternal figure; second, I grew seeds of Indigenous axiology as Caguana, "the spirit of love"; and third, as methodology, Guabancex, the fierce "goddess of the hurricane" (Rouse, 1992, p. 122).

Kasibahagua, as the womb of Atabey, is in my mind, the womb of possibility. "Whatever becomes of Taíno resurgence moving forward, its survived and rekindled spiritual expressions point to a desired and needed world where: the future is ancestral; the future is ancient; the future is Atabey" (González, 2018, para. 17). No matter which manifestation we explore, Kasibahagua is the constant womb, prepared to birth new opportunities, and I honour Kasibahagua for birthing my tenacity and that of those who came before me. To birth these opportunities, we must honour Sassuma Arnaa and tend to youths holistically, in name/soul, body, and spirit.

Reflecting on the principal question

> *How can elements found within the framework of extant First Nations, Métis, and Inuit curricula and curricular resources presented be used to help educators explore potentials for fostering resilient First Nations, Métis, and Inuit youths; and reduce truancy in the process?*

I formulated the research questions to explore how teacher education can better equip non-Indigenous educators by utilizing First Nations, Métis, and Inuit curricula and curricular resources. In my mind, the Inuuqatigiit (2016) and Dene Kede (1993) crafted a pedagogical approach more aligned with Indigenous values and holism given their well-defined process toward the integration of elders, community and Indigenous language promotion. Engaging elders and the community were not left to chance nor misinterpretation; meaning that in one case, for instance, among several reasons, the Inuuqatigiit Curriculum (1996) was created because:

> [b]efore students can understand and take ownership of language and culture, they need to know who they are, where they came from, and where they belong in today's society…Inuuqatigiit gives educators a starting point for creating partnerships with students, parents, organizations and community. By building on these resources, educators can help develop Inuit schools that truly reflect the Inuit perspective. (p. i)

As an Indigenous person, in my mind, the importance of reclaiming one's identity is colossal and may feel difficult to capture by educators and students alike in any single word. My family and I fought hard to maintain my identity when I left Borikén, as through my parents' insistence on maintaining my mother tongue at home despite the efforts the school made to ensure I assimilated. Now, with the knowledge I have acquired during the course of my research, my motivation has only grown deeper. Inuuqatigiit (1996) had a formidable way of capturing the values and traditions of Inuit people for the future. It was a way to "enrich the student's exposure to many different types of skills which will involve meaningful language" (Inuuqatigiit, 1996, p.2). The curriculum created surpasses time, and it shaped "a new path in the schooling system where communities will play a more visible role in their children's education" (Inuuqatigiit,

1996, p.3). As I saw it, another critical element was the reverberation of Atabey as nurturer, given that elders were the underpinning of the curriculum with which they disseminated Inuit ways of knowing and the value of unity, all evident in the curriculum which stated that:

> Inuuqatigiit, means Inuit to Inuit, people to people, living together or family to family. It implies togetherness and family unity between people. This is the foundation of the curriculum: a unity of Inuit philosophy for the benefit of the children, teachers, schools and communities. (Inuuqatigiit, 1996, p.3)

The Inuit philosophy within the curriculum was crafted with authenticity grounded on the lands of the Inuit. The Inuit involved ensured it was meaningful and not tokenistic because "it was the elders that gave the information they felt was important to remember. As they gave their information, many reflections and stories were interwoven with facts. It is their knowledge that gives this curriculum its true Inuit essence" (Inuuqatigiit, 1996, p.4). In my mind, ensuring that each learner actively engages with elders in their respective communities was echoed most powerfully in Inuuqatigiit (1996) and in Dene Kede (1993). These curricula will surely safeguard the authenticity and relevance to the identity of each youth, of the Indigenous ways of knowing being crafted in each, thus nourishing each one, as Sassuma Arnaa (see Chapter Four) nourishes with her bounty.

When addressing the goal of promoting Inuit youngsters to feel pride in their culture and develop a strong sense of identity, one of the critical things Inuuqatigiit (1996) supported was encouraging youngsters to have their discussions in their mother tongue first (p.5). I have first-hand insight into the success Indigenous language promotion brings and the trust it builds. Teachers who do not speak the language of the students in their classrooms must make an effort to prioritize this in their agenda because "Time for this must be respected. Inuit input cannot be

adequately addressed as a last thought or in a rush nor always in the second language" (Inuuqatigiit, 1996, p.5). McCarty et al. (2006) supported such prioritization, which I reasoned in my methodology (see Chapter Four). McCarthy (2006) stated that "Indigenous communities face enormous challenges in revitalizing and maintaining their languages" (p.43). Such awareness creates a chance for us as educators to be active supporters of this revitalization. It additionally works toward answering my principal research question (see Chapter Two).

Broadly speaking, for Western educators, the emphasis on community importance is an aspect that is perhaps treated differently than it is for Indigenous people and Inuuqatigiit (1996) and Dene Kede (1993) were the curricula in which community importance stood out most clearly. Decision-making on how a young person carries on in the school system could be considered, by Western teachers, to be the purview of parents and teachers, with less of a role played by the community. Inuuqatigiit (1996) reinforced that Inuit people "want learning to be just as meaningful for today as it was in the past. It does not mean that learning deals only with traditional and historical information, but to begin with the life of the child and the community" (Inuuqatigiit, 1996, p.14). The reduced emphasis on the importance of rural communities makes Inuuqatigiit that much more valuable. As I see it, Indigenous people understand how essential it is to ensure youths learn the importance of community and what it has to offer, rather than solely relying on Western education to provide these lessons, mainly because it is essential to present these positively. The prioritizing of community was supported by Corbett when he stated that

> the concept of rurality itself … has come to be abandoned by many contemporary academics to be replaced by regional studies. This ambivalence is also buttressed in higher education with a very clear set of prejudices about which places matter and which do not. (Corbett, 2009, p. 6)

In my mind, a connection to the place where individuals grow and develop their identity in relation to their ancestors should not be severed but rather reinforced for being the essential element that it is.

Another way that Inuuqatigiit supported culturally relevant pedagogy was by underlining that "Instruction should always relate subjects to Inuit history, knowledge and experience" (Inuuqatigiit, 1996, p.15). I recall in my own experience how educators were encouraged to provide the "Greenlandic context," which has the best of intentions. Still, suppose the educator is new to the community. In that case, providing such context can be an insurmountable undertaking since it requires experience in carrying the lesson out and strong community involvement. Inuuqatigiit (1996) had many approaches to ensure the success of the curriculum; however, there are two that were particularly salient in the promotion of stability and constructing identity. The first was to

> ensure there is appropriate inservicing and orientation of all partners in Inuuqatigiit; This can be done within your school every year. It can include your board staff…as well as other community members. The more community members get involved…the more continuity there will be in your school. (Inuuqatigiit, 1996, p.24)

Partnerships between community members and educators for cultural knowledge sharing and sharing their insight on the persons who are learning could ensure a more stable educational environment for all Indigenous youngsters. In the specific case of teachers educating Inuit youths, teachers need to realize that the clarion call to involve the community runs deep and is woven into each identity in a unique and unparalleled way. I see it as an especially notable call given that

> Inuit see life as an unbroken circle in which everyone and everything as a role…This is why Inuit names are significant. Inuit believe the spirit of a person who has died is passed on to the newborn named after them. This transference of a spirit happens to the extent that your namesake's family relationships become yours, as do many of their skills and personality traits. Naming provides a link between generations, and ties to other people who are not necessarily related by blood. (Inuuqatigiit, 1996, p.31)

I have heard students in my classes in Greenland attest to the importance of naming, and many of them have told me stories about whom they are named after. Here in Canada, my interactions with kalaaleq scholar Dr. Jessen Williamson demonstrated such significance. She had similarly attested to the importance of her name, *Karla*, in honour of her cousin, who died when she was relatively young (K. Jessen Williamson, personal communication, 2021). Furthermore, in considering the nourishing spirit of Sassuma Arnaa, I connected it to how Jessen Williamson (2011) reinforced the value of considering the framework of "timikkut," "tarnikkut," "anersaakkullu" when she stated that "Mapping the souls/name network … would provide a human perspective that is unique and different from that offered by the standard European surname system" (p.150). The importance of community in the context mentioned above needs to be communicated to young teachers who may not have this awareness, particularly in the cases of teachers who, at times, like to give their students Western nicknames, which they often claim are easier to pronounce.

Moreover, it is an awareness that works toward providing another element that answers my principal question (see Chapter Two) since it is an element found within the framework of extant Inuit curricula that can help educators explore a clear potential for fostering resilient Inuit youths and reduce truancy in the process. An Inuit name or names gives that person an

"immediate identity" from birth (Inuuqatigiit, 1996, p.43). Given such knowledge, Inuuqatigiit has taken great care to educate youths on this critical cultural aspect (see Table 4) that reinforces a level of context regarding names, which creates unique connections to community and identity, and has the potential to foster resilience:

Table 5.4

Names and Naming

Names and Naming

CYCLE OF LIFE	CYCLE OF SEASONS	CIRCLE OF BELONGING
Grades 7 - 9	**Grades 10 - 12**	
Objectives Students will: • share information about their namesake they are particularly proud of; • appreciate the significance of naming; • recognize the special relationship created with the person/s who have the same name as you; • be encouraged to use kinship terms.	***Objectives*** Students will: • appreciate the origins of their names; • identify abilities they have because of their names; • understand the mourning practices of the community and the bonds that are created when the name is passed on; • learn how to identify kinship relationships by the terms they hear; • understand and respect the importance of naming.	
Knowledge and Traditions • A child may be a "correcting" character of the person they are named after. • Giving gifts to the kin of your name was important in continuing the family bond. • Visiting the kin of your name was also important in continuing the family bonds.	***Knowledge and Traditions*** • Families started telling a child their namesake's abilities as soon as they were born. • If a child is always sick, rename. • Mourning is done first for a dead one before the name is passed on. • When a baby is given a name and keeps getting sick, or does not survive, the name has to be changed or kept as a second name.	
Key Experiences/Activities • Have the students interview an elder about the importance of names. • Have the students trace their name. • Give children who do not have Inuit names a name that reflects their personality. This can be done with the class or with the help of an elder who has done this before. • Have the students call older people by relationship name. • Have the students find out which ones are named after the same person in their school. • Have the students do a book report about the person they are named after. Write about the persons strengths, interests, personality and characteristics. If possible, photographs and personal quotes or notes from their names family can be included.	***Key Experiences/Activities*** • Have the students research the origins of their names with the help of elders/others. • Have the students interview elders about mourning and naming practices. • Have the students write a cheerful letter to a younger student who have the same name as them or is "related" to them through their names. • Have the students research in their family anyone that has been renamed and why. • Have the students do poetry writing about who they are named after, characteristics of the name they admire, etc. • If possible, have the students trace their name to other regions, Northern Quebec, Labrador, Greenland, and/or Alaska.	

Inuuqatigiit Curriculum 45

Note. Inuuqatigiit Curriculum, 1996 (p.45).

http://inuuqatigiit.ca/wpcontent/uploads/2018/03/Part1_InuuqatigiitCurriculum.pdf

As previously stated, Dene Kede (1993) likewise aligned with my principal research question through its well-defined process integrating elders, community and Indigenous language promotion. The Dene "learning expectations are broadly categorized into four areas and relate to the students' relationships with: the spiritual world, the land, other people, and themselves" (Dene Kede, 1993, p. 4), which similarly formed the basis for the thematic units developed for the curriculum. There was likewise an essential language expectation, and it stated that:

> Dene language competence, either in the first language or as a second language, is expected to be taught in the context of teaching or developing these relationships. Language expectations for both first and second language are therefore included as a part of this curriculum. (Dene Kede, 1993, p. 4)

The deliberate indication of prioritizing Dene language competence expressed the spirit of Guabancex through the disruption of the colonial discourse via the prioritization of Indigenous ways of knowing. It accomplished this through the primacy of creating work grounded in the Dene culture, irrespective of the level of mastery of the language of the youths. It demonstrated a commitment to look to the future in step with honouring the language that will carry on the lessons passed on by Dene elders and their ancestors. Hence, in addressing the purposes for creating the Dene Kede (1993) curriculum, the curriculum designers discussed the importance of facilitating their Dene outlook, their very existence, pride in being Dene, healing, and the connection that the language brings to understanding all other relationships (Dene Kede, 1993). This outlook reproduced the seed I planted of asset-based pedagogy nourished by Atabey to help Indigenous youngsters develop identities that foster success (López, 2017). It additionally

resonates with the conscientiousness on Triple Learning raised by Palmer-Clarke (2015), as the young person navigates in an education system that acknowledges their challenges:

> Learning in a new culture can be taxing on the individual who has already internalized one set of cultural practices. The social nature of learning allows for a holistic, interconnected approach and dimension to learning. People are who they are based on their cultures of origin and their learning practices. (p. 191)

Among those responsible for the successful delivery of the curriculum, the resource highlighted all the key people to ensure its success, which resonates with Caguana and working in good faith, as the adage always imparts, "It takes a village." I focused my attention on the subject teachers, Dene classroom assistants & language specialists, Dene teachers, the Community Education Committee, and the elders. The subject teachers focus on the learning goals of core subjects, such as math and language arts. Part of their job is to "articulate these learning expectations with the key experiences and learning expectations from the Dene curriculum [and they] work as a team with the Dene Kede teachers to plan thematic units" (Dene Kede,1993, p. 9). This action would be a beneficial collaboration for all parties involved, as it builds on their strengths.

Another answer to my primary question is addressed by another set of significant educators- the Dene classroom assistants and Dene language specialists. I particularly appreciated seeing them recognized for the critical role in bridging the cultural gap and how the roles have developed. The curriculum described that:

> When classroom assistants were first brought into the schools, they were Dene people who were hired to help the non-Dene teacher with the extra tasks that often arose in the intercultural teaching situation. Over the years, many worked in partnership with

> the teacher, actually helping to deliver programs when language barriers arose. Today, the assistants are recognized for their professional roles and contributions, not the least of which is the teaching of Dene language and culture. Aboriginal Language Specialist positions have been created to recognize these teachers. (Dene Kede,1993, p. 9)

The collaboration mentioned above can be fruitful when adequately organized and when there is transparency of expectations. Based on my own experience as an educator, it is essential to ensure that teachers are always counselled adequately to maximize the effectiveness of the collaboration with an assistant or a language specialist. We should consider that new teachers may feel overwhelmed by planning their core lessons and lack experience working with someone else being in the classroom. Developing such knowledge should never be treated lightly, as it can add undue stress for everyone involved in a situation that ought to be a winning partnership when adequately planned. Furthermore, the focus on Dene classroom assistants versus a non-Dene classroom assistant can be a change-maker for the students. Often, the discomfort a youth experiences is related to a language or a culturally related matter, rather than a lack of personnel available per student. This support works toward answering my principal question (see Chapter Two), as a better connection with the educator could reduce truancy.

In answering my primary question, I would conclude that Dene Kede (1993), Innuqatigiit (1996) and Four Directions Teachings (2012) were the ones that excelled at focusing on the heart of the network-the ones who provide the core of the knowledge that can shift the paradigm; just as Atabey nurtures our understanding of knowledge, I looked to the elders, who are the primary source of information regarding:

- Survival skills
- Historical knowledge
- Dene medicine and spirituality
- Stories and legends
- Customs and rituals
- Language and terminology
- Values and traditions (Dene Kede,1993, p. 13).

Elders guide everyone, not just students. "They are in a position to do this because they understand Dene values and spirituality gained from years of living and surviving. In times of conflict or on routine matters, their counsel is very important" (Dene Kede,1993, p. 13). Sustaining the Dene identity, the elders can encourage youngsters to develop a strong sense of who they are and to feel that they are a part of something bigger than themselves. To me, such sustenance resonates with the power of Atabey in nurturing our understanding of knowledge. It is a sense of purpose that addresses my main question (see Chapter Two) because it can support the resilience youths need to develop from taking on challenges, learning from those willing and ready to impart knowledge, and feeling seen in a school system that honours and celebrates their Indigeneity.

The answer to my principal question when looking at Full Circle (2012) lies in the medicine wheel organization provided. Crafting Full Circle (2012) was a colossal undertaking, resolute in its representation of multiple Indigenous ways of knowing. The designers crafted it to educate a more diverse population of Indigenous and non-Indigenous youths, so with that perspective in mind, I could appreciate its breadth. Full Circle (2012) offered myriad lessons and guides the educators toward incorporating these into a more Western curricular framework.

Although it was encouraged, there was not as much guidance on the integration of elders and community, which is an aspect that could be adapted by getting inspiration from Inuuqatigiit (1996) and Dene Kede (2016). I believe Full Circle (2012) has blended the Indigenous content well into the core curriculum. Still, there was a penchant for Western standards of assessment, for example, a proclivity for essay writing assignments. I suggest such an aspect is worth reimagining for increased retention of Indigenous youths in schools.

Full Circle (2012) systematically categorized the material by subjects typically offered in Western curricula, such as social sciences, geography, English, business, etc. Hence, providing an additional framework that could help guide Western educators who are not sure how to weave Indigenous ways of knowing into their classes. I found particular value in questions crafted by Indigenous peoples for each lesson to safeguard that youngsters reflect on aspects that promote Indigenous values. I particularly appreciated the section on emotional lessons youths could acquire from learning about residential schools. One "Feel it" section aimed to address this tragic disconnect forced upon Indigenous individuals by having the youngsters of today consider events such as:

> Shirley Cheechoo, in her interview, makes a statement; "when you only live with people for six weeks of the year, would you tell them anything?" Teachers could use this as a jumping off point to discuss the separation that existed and how that impacted the trust between children and parents. (Full Circle, 2012, p.101)

Educators can connect such lessons to understanding and appreciating the resilience that has been necessary for Indigenous children who were subjected to these horrors, to reconnect to the Indigenous culture and languages of their ancestors, for their sakes, and for the sake of future generations. I do feel that while (Full Circle, 2012) encouraged critical thinking throughout the

curriculum, the lessons were delivered applying what appeared to be primarily Western pedagogical approaches. Nevertheless, teachers were encouraged to tailor these lessons to make them their own. The opportunity to infuse them with a more Indigenous approach would be beneficial for all parties when done respectfully, when done with Caguana. The lessons could have a more significant impact if they were delivered in collaboration with Indigenous community members as collaborating would cement the importance of working together to build a strong sense of identity and belonging, thus addressing "anersaakkullu" and "tarnikkut," the spirit and the name/soul (Jessen Williamson, 2011). The point above is further cemented by standpoint theory which highlighted that "Teachers ongoing development of Indigenous students' cultural codes and those of students from diverse backgrounds enable possibilities to build culturally safe frameworks to generate reciprocity and motivation required for successful student learning outcomes" (MacGill, 2016, p. 245). A broader holistic approach could yield a more potent holistic outcome, therefore answering my principal question and reducing truancy.

The WE Learn Together (2016) resource was an initiative of the WE Charity, which "empowers people of all ages to make a difference, both domestically and internationally, through programs like WE Schools and WE Villages" (WE Charity, 2020, para. 1). It answers my principal question by helping non-Indigenous educators and students bond by increasing Indigenous topics through activities beyond written work, such as music, art and leadership opportunities, which I will clarify. In this sense, it had some similarity to Inuuqatigiit and their focus which extends beyond Western pedagogies. In guiding educators, WE Learn Together (2016) explained how it helps:

> bring aspects of First Nations, Métis and Inuit culture into your classroom. With feature articles on best practices for incorporating Indigenous materials into the classroom and

> the impact of the Sacred Circle leadership program, this guide provides tips for ways to change your classroom… we've provided lessons and resources from WE Schools programming on topics including reconciliation between Indigenous and non-Indigenous Peoples, creating inclusive community spaces, and the Truth and Reconciliation Commission…we offer a reading list for your students and yourself. We are committed to honoring the rightful place of Indigenous Canadians in Canadian education. (p.3)

Furthermore, the designers addressed how one aspect called *WE's Sacred Circle* program began in 2009, works with youths ages 10-18 who identify as First Nations, Métis, and Inuit. Regardless of where they live or their status, they examine how they could help their communities by assuming roles as leaders. Taking Indigenous leadership in communities honours Guabancex by disrupting the image of what leadership looks like. This particular *Sacred Circle* program that WE offer is facilitated all over Canada and takes three days to complete. The people who run the program attest that they collaborate with Indigenous people but that the schools and community are the ones who link with community elders and leaders. Schools and community members create their connections with Elders and other leaders "to enhance cultural aspects of Sacred Circle. We're not there to drive the content, but to facilitate the process through which young people can learn from each other. It's what makes it comfortable for me to do this" (WE Learn Together, 2016, p. 7). Sometimes, getting the conversation started is the first step that needs to happen.

WE Learn Together (2016) was meant to help educators inspire youths to be agents of change for the future and to consider their ancestry and strengthen their sense of identity while addressing their societal role at a local and global scale. Such was the power of the first example I will address. It was meant for secondary students and addressed themes of:

> Education, Indigenous Canadians, Local Issues, Values and Ethics [with the specific expectations that students will] Investigate Canadian historical narratives, Explore the need to make Canadian history more relevant for youth, [and] Create artwork for a historical narrative from a diverse lens to think critically. (WE Learn Together, 2016, p. 34)

In this particular lesson, by combining current musicals, such as *Hamilton*, with real-life stories, such as that of Chanie Wenjack, students were encouraged to express themselves through song or even write their own play using facts (WE Learn Together, 2016, p. 34). (See Table 5)

Table 5.5

Secondary Resource for Integrating Indigenous Knowledge

Secondary Resource

THEMES AND COURSE CONNECTIONS

- Themes: Education, Indigenous Canadians, Local Issues, Values and Ethics
- Course Connections: The Arts, English and Canadian and World Studies

MATERIALS

- Front board
- Paper and writing utensils
- Computer/tablet with Internet access and video capability

SPECIFIC EXPECTATIONS AND LEARNING GOALS

Students will:

- Investigate Canadian historical narratives
- Explore the need to make Canadian history more relevant for youth
- Create art work for a historical narrative from a diverse lens to think critically

DISCUSS

1. In your opinion, why aren't young Canadians excited about their own history?
2. Does Canadian popular culture and mainstream media accurately reflect the cultural diversity in the country?
3. What perspective does history typically come from? Does this make history unapproachable?
4. Do you think it is more important for theatrical productions to be historically accurate or representative of our culturally diverse society (when they don't align)? Explain.
5. The *Global Voices* article states "we have to make sure that the faces on our stage represent the faces in our community." How will a shift in creating historical narratives with a diverse cultural and artistic perspective allow all Canadians to want to engage with our histories?
6. Why is it important that stories, like the Chanie Wenjack story, are being put into the spotlight? What does this historical story mean for Canadians today?
7. What stories or what cultural groups would you like to see represented on Canadian stages and in the media?
8. How can we better represent the Indigenous perspective of Canadian history on stage and in the media?

DIVE DEEPER

1. Read the *Global Voices* article "Canada's unwritten smash hit history musical" and discuss the following questions with students. Share the video "Hamilton Clips: Hip Hop Musical About Making of America" www.youtube.com watch?v=eOdWU-EnOEk (1:30).
   a. Why was the historical musical *Hamilton* well received by Canadian and American youth alike?
   b. How was the musical relevant for youth? What changes did *Hamilton* make compared to traditional musicals to be more engaging and relatable?
   c. Why is history so often unappealing to youth? What would help to make it more appealing?
   d. How can the historical narrative change from being male white dominated to culturally diverse?
   e. Why is it important to see yourself present within your own local histories?
2. As a class, brainstorm a list of relevant historical stories that students find interesting. Have a discussion about the key event or person in your local history to learn why students found this story appealing. Ask students: How do you relate to this story on a personal level? Do you see yourselves in Canadian history? What is your interest level in history? Would you spend time outside of school reading, watching documentaries or films or listening to podcasts in your personal time to learn more?
3. In groups of three or four, ask students to explore one event or person from Canadian history they find appealing. Students should use textbooks, the Internet and oral stories to collect information about the event or person.
4. Ask students to write a short story, song, poem or play about the historical events with relevant factual information. Students will have the opportunity to present and share their piece with the rest of the class.
5. To reflect on the process of creating the historical art form, ask students to explore the following reflection questions:
   a. What makes a historical event or person relevant for youth?
   b. How is the historical story they are presenting relatable for youth in communities from across Canada, whether rural, urban, central, northern, eastern or western Canada?
   c. What can you add into the creation of the art form to engage youth to want to discover more about Canadian history?
   d. How can you ensure that the dramatic art form is historically accurate and represents the true story while honouring a diverse perspective and society?

ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

Hamilton Broadway Musical www.hamiltonbroadway.com

Gord Downie's "Secret Path" www.secretpath.ca

Note. Reprinted from WE Learn Together, 2016 (p.34). https://cdn.we.org/wp-content/uploads/2015/08/INDIGENOUS_Guide_20161018_FINAL_V4_Nov_15_WEB.pdf?_ga=2.251501446.1614365090.1510773933-449789498.1510773933.

The lesson addressed above would encourage students to express themselves and connect in a way that appeals to the common thread of popular adolescent interests while steering the focus toward increased Indigenous knowledge. It could be another way to help form bonds between youngsters and educators, which provides another answer to my primary question (see Chapter Two). The lesson described above resonates with the example I discussed from my lived experience in Greenland, where students were encouraged to infuse a musical production of *Alice in Wonderland* and turn it into *Aviaq in Wonderland*, with kalaallit history. Such is the kind of action that is encouraged by the Greenland Reconciliation Commission (Forsogningskommissionen, 2017), strengthening the Inuit voice and ownership, as well as respectful representation. It too targets my underlying questions since it encouraged a relationship good faith, of Caguana, with the educators as allies in a less Western academic mode and gave each youth a level of ownership that helped them recognize that the educators valued the individual's culture, thus empowering them by honouring their identity.

WE Learn Together (2016) supported educators looking to bridge the gap between Indigenous knowledge and Western knowledge while simultaneously focusing on the global scale and inspiring Indigenous youths to see the importance of their interests and values. It had good unifying and empowering qualities, but in my mind, it did not have the breadth that Full Circle (2012) has, nor the depth of holism of Inuuqatigiit (1996) or that of Dene Kede (2016). The *WE's Sacred Circle* program is committed to showing young people how each could help their communities by assuming roles as leaders. What I valued most from WE Learn Together (2016) was the drive to push youngsters not just to be proud of their Indigenous heritage but to show the world what Indigeneity has to offer.

As I indicated, Inuuqatigiit (1996), Dene Kede (1993), and Four Direction Teachings (2012) answered my principal question through their focus on oral traditions. Still, Four Directions Teachings (2012) presented a different path toward achieving the emphasis on orality. As it said on the website, Four Directions Teachings (2012) "is a visually stunning audio narrated resource for learning about Indigenous knowledge and philosophy from five diverse First Nations in Canada" (para. 1). It aligned, to an extent, with honouring oral traditions, albeit without the elders being physically present, in an interactive manner. It was accompanied by a resource kit for teachers to navigate the website correctly. This resource referred to *Aboriginal* peoples; therefore, I did so in this section with that in mind. The designers acknowledged the differences in Aboriginal nations while addressing the unifying element, which is "an overall worldview that embraces concepts of cyclical interdependency and equilibrium, demonstrated through natural patterns of repetition. These concepts were reflected in the interactive Four Directions website design model (based on the concept of the Medicine Wheel)" (Four Directions Teacher Resource Kit, n/d, p.3). According to the Four Directions Teacher Resource Kit (n/d), the goals of this particular curriculum were four-fold; first, to deliver quality by bringing "living traditional Aboriginal perspectives, knowledge and wisdom of the world to the forefront of the educational experience" (pp. 1-2); second, to encourage Indigenous educational practices by supporting "the implementation of teaching methodologies that are distinctly indigenous. Ultimately, we hope the Four Directions curricul[um] will contribute to the fostering of quality cross-cultural discussion on educational practice" (p.2); third, to encourage holistic education, by arguing that it was crafted "to nurture the self-actualization… through the sacred circle concept…there is ample opportunity for multidisciplinary learning …it weaves the study of the arts with the sciences and humanities, from a platform based in technology, using a

culturally relevant framework" (p. 2); and fourth, to encourage Aboriginal literacy by trying to help advance Aboriginal students in their English literacy, and although they recognize that it would have been great to deliver these teachings in the Aboriginal languages it was "simply beyond the scope of this project …although over the longer term, we hope to address this area as well. Each teaching offers a reading in print form in English as well as an audio segment" (p.3).

Four Directions Teachings (2012) promoted Caguana by collaborative learning opportunities done in good faith, which further developed relationships with the communities where the youths reside. During my analysis of the curriculum resource kit, one of the key aspects that emerged was contacting elders. The designers were comprehensive in explaining the protocols needed for contacting an elder and the factors that should be considered. They additionally provided a list of the elders who narrated their wisdom for the project. Protocol advice should be invaluable for Western educators who may not be familiar with the protocols for inviting an elder and are looking for guidance on how to facilitate these vital connections in their community (Four Directions Teacher Resource Kit, n/d). The level of guidance addressed above works to answer my primary question (see Chapter Two) and could be beneficial if incorporated in other curricula.

The design of the site was intentional in its connections to Indigenous knowledge by blending Indigeneity with current educational methods:

> Four Directions is designed to replicate the fundamental flow of movement and interconnectivity of the indigenous experience. The virtual reality of the Medicine Wheel on the website maintains a central, internal, user base as marked by appropriate signposts such as the rose (Ojibwe) or the tipi (Cree) while encouraging travel to higher and lower planes. Lateral movement is equally possible. Visitors explore the nature of Indigenous

> thinking by literally opening the doorways to simulate travel through theoretical dimensions through the click of a mouse. This multidimensional learning environment offers readings, sound recordings, and fun and interesting interactive links, all self-controlled. This is an unprecedented opportunity, where interactive technology meets education. (Four Directions Teacher Resource Kit, n/d, p.10)

Unlike Full Circle (2012) and WE Learn Together (2016), the lesson plans for Four Directions Teachings (2012) wove the nurturing spirit of Atabey through the wisdom of particular elders- something similarly prioritized by Inuuqatigiit (1996) and by Dene Kede (1993). Some unique points that stood out specifically in Four Directions Teacher Resource Kit (n/d) that the lesson plans all incorporate are:

- The name of the elder from whom the traditional teaching originates
- The elder's nation
- The traditional teaching name
- A summary of the traditional teaching (a teacher summary for the junior grades and a student summary for the intermediate and senior grades)
- Subject strand links (general provincial curriculum links). (p.10)

Such planning ensures a level of authenticity for each lesson by steering clear of any pan-Indigenous approaches, honouring the uniqueness of each lesson. For example, one lesson plan designed for seniors, on the Ojibwe teachings from elder Lillian Pitawanakwat provided strategies for youths to draw cultural connections at an emotional level connected to the Medicine Wheel. Here are four of these strategies:

1. Bring in a plate of strawberries for the class to enjoy. Generate a discussion on the fruit and where it comes from, where it grows, its season, and its byproducts. What

does the strawberry symbolize in cultural folklore? How has this fruit figured in literature?

2. Introduce Ms. Lillian Pitawanakwat as an Ojibwe elder from Manitoulin Island, Ontario, who will share traditional teachings on the strawberry and what it represents to the Ojibwe.
3. Visit www.fourdirectionteachings.com to hear the Strawberry Teaching as told by the elder.
4. Discuss the teaching. How does the process of grieving for the lost brother change following the introduction of the strawberry? What responsibility does the surviving brother have to himself in his healing? What role does self-forgiveness play in healing? How would this story help one through the grieving process? What happens when one focuses on grief and nothing else? (Lillian Pitawanakwat Lesson Plan, 2006, p.4)

Lessons employing strategies such as the one above, addressing the passage of time, could help individuals develop resilience and draw strength by understanding deeper connections and Indigenous perspectives to help them through difficult periods in their lives.

Four Directions Teachings (2012) did a superb job of demonstrating how technology can deliver more holistic content to Indigenous youths. The developers crafted a resource that was particularly commendable for its focus on elders, from having the oral delivery of ancestral knowledge to the information they provide to educators on protocols in which educators may not be versed. Critics can argue that orality should be carried out in person; however, this is one way to ensure that teachings are passed on to those who are not able, for whatever reason, to meet

with an elder—in such a way, addressing accessibility, to an extent. The fact that the teachings were recorded allows individuals to revisit them at their leisure.

Upon reflection, it is clear to me that Inuuqatigiit (1996), Dene Kede (1993), and Four Directions Teachings (2012) had a unique focus on the importance of oral traditions and reinforcing community bonds. Inuuqatigiit (1996) and Dene Kede (1993) were the most comprehensive in integrating community engagement and prioritizing Indigenous language acquisition, which is also easier to do in places with more homogeneous populations. Full Circle (2012) and We Learn Together (2016) catered to more diverse representations of Indigenous students and were thus more multicultural in the lessons they delivered, which is why I raised the point of how important it is to ensure educators in multicultural classrooms get to know precisely who their students represent to ensure their representation and voices are heard, and their resilience fostered.

Context for conducting this research

There are two contexts from which I envisioned carrying out my work, first, as an Indigenous educator who has navigated through the colonial binary Western knowledge systems, and as an educator who has had the honour and responsibility of educating Indigenous youths. Secondly, I envisioned it as an educator of Indigenous youths who has learned the potential of decolonizing education and of applying Indigenous knowledge systems. As cited in Foucault et al. (2000), "We have to promote new forms of subjectivity through the refusal of this kind of individuality that has been imposed on us for several centuries" (p. 336). We need to work together as communities if we are ever to make a tangible change.

Goal of research

The goal was two-fold. First, to provide current insight to non-Indigenous educators of Indigenous youths as to why it is imperative to educate with a decolonizing lens if we are to kindle a tangible paradigm shift toward Indigeneity that is ethical (see Appendix 1), will foster resilience, and reduce truancy. Second, to show each multiple ways of how it could be done.

Implication to knowledge

Having addressed my questions has thus brought me full circle to the principal question which asked, "How can elements found within the framework of extant First Nations, Métis, and Inuit curricula and curricular resources presented be used to help educators explore potentials for fostering resilient First Nations, Métis, and Inuit youths; and reduce truancy in the process?" I have tried to the best of my ability to demonstrate not only how these potentials can be explored but furthermore delved into the reasons why it is essential. Promoting the use of Indigenous curricula and curricular resources could positively impact how each educator perceives and educates Indigenous youngsters, how each relates to the land and communities, and positively affect how all youths relate to each educator, to one another, and to nature. Training infused with culturally relevant knowledge and increased community involvement could shift the preconceptions formed by some non-Indigenous educators of how knowledge is dispensed and received. It can extend where knowledge is acquired and broaden the scope of which knowledge is valued. Foucault et al. (2000) echoed the point when stating that:

> communicating is always a certain way of acting upon another person or persons. But the production and circulation of elements of meaning can have as their objective or as their consequence certain results in the realm of power…Whether or not they pass through systems of communication, power relations have a specific nature. (p. 337)

A paradigm shift has the potential to birth a better, more equitable relationship among all parties involved. The implications of how, what, and why we communicate exceed the scope of one imagination, but the implications to knowledge and education are no doubt substantial. I will next address how my work explained the potentials surrounding how educators can work toward the prevention of 'truancy,' fostering of 'resilience,' and how standpoint theory can motivate non-Indigenous educators to consider a paradigm shift toward Indigenous ways of knowing. These were the drivers of my inquiry analyzing curricula and curricular resources through the lens of my research questions. I will moreover share my recommendations and, finally, my concluding words.

Chapter Six

Findings pertinent to questions raised

In this last chapter, I sought answers to my questions by way of the curricular documents and curricular resources. I felt that my queries were greatly rewarded, and this chapter will then address how my findings were pertinent to the questions, my contribution to teaching, and reveal my reasons why any educator should value Indigenous paradigms. I end the chapter with recommendations for future research.

In discussing standpoint theory in Chapter Three, I brought up that Medina-Minton (2018) observed how standpoint theory had evolved into "one that explores the communication between groups, the behaviors that manifest among the different group members due to their power locations, and the societal position that different groups occupy" (p. 440). I made the utmost effort to not just animate but illustrate Medina-Minton's (2018) perspective on standpoint theory, such as is evident in Chapter Five, where I addressed how Full Circle (2012) nourished youths with the freedom to explore their own Indigenous lived story through projects that confront social issues. Full Circle (2012) designers addressed these projects from the points of view of each young person, thus opening up communication between individuals in different power locations.

I have come to define the above definition by Medina Minton (2018) as an arena where I saw my own lived experience teaching Inuit youths in Nuuk, Greenland. With the above, I discussed the importance of Medina Minton's (2018) idea of standpoint theory, where I highlighted the role of community, like that of the family groups of the students at GUX Nuuk, which following Medina Minton (2018), I recognized "different group members…their power locations, and the societal position" (p. 440). I saw my own teaching of Inuit youths in Nuuk being the very 'arena' from which her standpoint is grounded. As indicated in Chapter Three, I

highlighted how Harding (2009) recommended that effective research should be organized by first looking at the sociological component and the natural application of standpoint theory for work that "focused on race, class, sexuality, and studies in postcolonial research" (p. 193). Furthermore, Moreton-Robinson (2013) furthermore presented work that supported my argument for the need to address truancy and resilience by considering the positionality of educators, community members, and Indigenous youths, as highlighted in Chapter Three, where I mentioned her compelling call to challenge the patriarchy in order to evoke a paradigm shift. Ardill (2013) helped me understand how standpoint theory provides an opportunity to "address power" (p.332), as discussed in Chapter Three. It furthermore helped me challenge the construction of knowledge, as I said in Chapter Four, which is likewise at the heart of my life story teaching Inuit youths in Nuuk. By considering the above theorists and writings, I internalized the messages and presented my thesis work.

My work supports Medina-Minton (2018), who saw the idea of standpoint theory as related to the communication between unequal partners; Harding (2009), who saw it as an effective tool for research race and social classes; Moreton-Robinson (2013), who emphasized the connection Indigenous people have to their ancestors, their blood, and how the link is the heart of Indigenous people being proprietors of knowledge; the idea of power relations from Ardill (2013); and Jessen Williamson (2011) who spoke of the concept of the triadic framework through which to view life and Inuit knowledge. Rather than seeing each scholarly perspective on its own or polarizing perspectives, I made connections between the authors to highlight the importance of negotiating curricula that brings community, and its members, front and centre. Based on my discovery and reflecting upon my experience as a Taíno teacher of Inuit high school students, I see standpoint theory as explained by Medina-Minton (2018), Harding (2009),

Moreton-Robinson (2013), and Ardill (2013), as a tool that enabled me to seek enriching communication opportunities within education - a tool to shift the paradigm and offer youths an Indigenous lens through which to acquire and share knowledge. Non-Indigenous educators are well advised through the work that I have undertaken to extend the communication as mentioned above that Medina-Minton (2018), Harding (2009), Moreton-Robinson (2013), and Ardill (2013) use explaining standpoint theory, in order to establish better communication lines by addressing marginalized Indigenous youths from their storied lives. My research, so far, on standpoint theory provides a theoretical foundation that encourages collaboration between non-Indigenous educators and each Indigenous youngster with whom each educator interacts. Such collaboration nurtures deeper connections. As I addressed in Chapter Four, such a sentiment was supported by Molnar (2009) when he addressed how moral inadequacies will emerge if we, as educators, fail to show our empathy and focus only on "narrow or restricted concerns for processes, structure and organization concerning such demands as student and teacher accountability, efficiency and achievement" (pp.244-245). The above passage echoes the type of empathy toward the Inuit youths at GUX Nuuk that I brought up in my positionality in Chapter One and how it helped me develop the deep connections that inspired my research. The choice to talk to a class about something that weighed in on them on a particularly tough day in order to address their needs as human beings versus focusing on a particular planned lesson. My work reveals how I envision a relationship in which communication is open, less power-driven and not contingent on binary perspectives- it is heartening and relational; as Jessen Williamson indicated in the Gender Equality in the Arctic Phase III Report (2021), "It is important to understand how any society works on gendered perspectives like patriarchy or matriarchy as each gives a lens to thoughts and actions" (p. 172). I envision progress through representation.

My most significant concern was to increase the mindfulness of non-Indigenous educators, so each is given a chance to foster resilience while at the same time reduce truancy among Indigenous youths by applying Indigenous knowledge from the curricula and curricular resources made by the First Nations and Inuit peoples. The message of the scholars, as mentioned earlier, guided me to ground my lived experience as a Taíno teacher of Inuit youths, as discussed in my positionality in Chapter One, and in the opportunities to ground the scholarly work presented through the curricula and curricular resources that have been crafted by Indigenous developers as explained in Chapter Five. The implication to knowledge nourishes the seeds I planted in my Indigenous methodology (Chapter Four) to develop strong roots of Indigenous knowledge systems that honour Kasibahagua and Sassuma Arnaa. Wilson (2001) echoed my outlook by addressing that:

> Indigenous methodology means talking about relational accountability. As a researcher you are answering to all your relations when you are doing research. You are not answering questions of validity or reliability or making judgements of better or worse…you should be fulfilling your relationships with the world around you…by looking at relational accountability or being accountable to all my relations. (p. 177)

I was delighted that I could combine my interest in feminism and standpoint theory to examine resilience and truancy. As stated in Chapter Three, standpoint theory has been defined as

> a feminist theoretical perspective that argues that knowledge stems from social position. The perspective denies that traditional science is objective and suggests that research and theory have ignored and marginalized women and feminist ways of thinking. The theory emerged from the Marxist argument that people from an oppressed class have special

access to knowledge that is not available to those from a privileged class. (Borland, 2020, para. 1)

Furthermore, I envision interaction based on communication on the marginalization of Indigenous peoples and how education can be used as an empowerment tool for youngsters in their present post-colonial status in nation-states that still insist on assimilation within various institutions, similar to the way the education system operates, generally speaking. To me, Medina-Minton's (2018) explanation of standpoint theory-where communication between parties is strongly implied- becomes a tool each educator can use in the communities where each works to highlight cultural awareness of the storied lives and the natural and spiritual world that embodies each community member. I see standpoint theory, as Ardill (2013) saw it as a tool to help all educators challenge hegemonic structures, and in turn, enable non-Indigenous educators to serve the youths and communities from an equitable and collaborative position. Applying the lens provided by Medina-Minton (2018) opens up the possibility of meaningful dialogues between parties in unequal positions, as is the case in our current education systems. To help youngsters form a robust Indigenous identity, each of the engaged educators, regardless of their cultural background, needs to be open to Indigenous ways of knowing - respecting the primacy of co-constructing knowledge and forming new narratives. My stance is supported by Kovach (2016), who believed in the importance of providing culturally relevant experiences and in having a willingness to explore and apply Indigenous paradigms, such as the triadic structure presented by Jessen Williamson (2011). Culturally relevant experiences are created by working with Indigenous communities.

My work is substantiated with support from the work of standpoint theory scholars such as Medina-Minton (2018), Harding (2009), Moreton-Robinson (2013), and Ardill (2013), and I

extend the theorist to now consider 'resilience' and 'truancy' into their explanations of standpoint theory, and how these inextricably connect and impact Indigenous youths. Each document I analyzed comes with a unique approach that requires Western educators to consider truancy reduction and promote resilience. Teuscher and Makarova (2018) addressed how "a good student-teacher relationship not only has positive impacts on students' school engagement, but is also negatively associated with truancy, while school engagement mediates this path" (p. 124). The above scenario is a prime example that appealed to me, and I see the implication of this statement to the standpoint theory quite directly. It now seems to me that standpoint theory, as I relished it, has shortcomings because of the lack of focus on examining curricula through a holistic lens that simultaneously examines it alongside truancy and resilience. To improve the trajectory toward success for Indigenous youths drastically, a robust relationship between educators, youngsters and community members, supported by applying standpoint theory, as explained by Medina-Minton (2018) as a communication tool whereby the curriculum and curricular resources are the very grounds from which negotiations between unequal players (students, teachers, institutions, knowledge keepers) needs nourishment. To discover a sounder approach to the reduction of truancy, I underscored the importance of discerning between voluntary and involuntary absenteeism, as well as the challenge the excused/unexcused binary presents. When considering truancy, Birioukov (2016) urged the reader to challenge the "implication that all unexcused absences are a pupil's voluntary decision. The blame for the absence is quickly shifted toward the student, while the wider society is absolved of any responsibility" (p. 347). In my mind, Birioukov (2016) presented hereby a challenge that underscores the current shortcomings of standpoint theory and the need for standpoint theory to

be inclusive of the symbiotic relationship played by resilience and truancy to be able to empower Indigenous youths genuinely.

My research revealed how working with a curriculum, or curricular resources can bridge the communication and negotiation between school and the community and could provide much-needed context on the storied lives of Indigenous youths. Promoting strong communication links where trust can be built between the players of education, including players in unequal settings, forms a bridge that would likewise help non-Indigenous educators collaborate with elders, community members, or both to craft relevant and meaningful learning experiences. An effort to collaborate evades what MacGill (2016) warned about: "Socially just and inclusive pedagogies are …lost in translation when educators fail to account for their performances of care as culturally, socially and structurally located" (MacGill, 2016, p. 240). As a person who taught Inuit high school students, I cannot overemphasize the need to see more young Indigenous persons feel that each looks forward to coming to school to get an education that makes them feel validated, understood, and respected enough. The documents analyzed in this research help guide such a journey toward equity by crafting a sense of awareness and opportunity for reflection that, in my mind, is currently not being addressed as holistically as could be possible. The more truancy is reduced, the greater the opportunities are to build resilience to withstand any problems connected to Western-oriented schooling.

As I highlighted in Chapter Three, the American Psychological Association defines the term *resilience* "as the process of adapting well in the face of adversity, trauma, tragedy, threats, or significant sources of stress" (American Psychological Association, 2020, para. 4). Ermine (2007) serves to remind us that these stressors cannot simply be reduced on their own:

> The anguished pattern in the history of Indigenous-West relations tells us that we have continued to do the same thing over and over again even as we pursued co-existence. So we continue the posturing and the status quo remains as it always has because we lack clear rules of engagement between human communities and have not paid attention to the electrifying space that would tell us what the other entity is thinking across the park bench. (p. 197)

Ermine (2007) addressed an inherent need for communication if stressors are to be reduced. A need for resilience to be addressed more holistically and in relationship with the land and our environment was echoed by Kirmayer et al. (2011), who believed Indigenous peoples in Canada see resilience "grounded in culturally distinctive concepts of the person that connect people to community and the environment, the importance of collective history, the richness of Aboriginal languages and traditions as well as individual and collective agency and activism" (p. 84). To me, it says you cannot build resilience among Indigenous youths without the elements of community members and the land, a relationship that Western theories on resilience do not clearly acknowledge.

As mentioned before, Medina-Minton (2018) noted that standpoint theory "explores the communication between groups, the behaviors that manifest among the different group members due to their power locations, and the societal position that different groups occupy" (p. 440), and therefore brings up the importance of giving a voice to those who are oppressed in society. It seems to me that there is an opportunity for educators, in general, to promote resilience by honouring equitable and inclusive communication when considering how and why to use curricula and curricular resources that uphold Indigenous ways of knowing. Indigenous youths deserve a learning environment that speaks to their home and cultural values: "early

environments and life circumstances play a role in how resilient genes are ultimately expressed" (“Resilience,” n.d., para. 4). In my mind, using curricula and curricular resources such as those presented in the research, I conducted provide ample opportunity to craft necessary positive experiences.

I now am able to reflect on the curricula and curricular resources I examined and can see the limitations of standpoint theory, as presented by Medina-Minton (2018), Harding (2009), Moreton-Robinson (2013), Ardill (2013), and Foley (2003), in terms of the missing context of building resilience and reducing truancy. Positive experiences that can build said resilience and decrease truancy, as I mentioned in Chapter Three, are supported by the Center on the Developing Child (The President and Fellows of Harvard College, 2020): "There are numerous opportunities in every child's life to experience manageable stress—and with the help of supportive adults, this "positive stress" can be growth-promoting" (para. 6). Standpoint theory, as I see it, redefined to include the connection to resilience building and truancy reduction is fundamental to the decision-making process of deciding which curricula to apply in a classroom and how to carry it out. Augmenting the definition to be inclusive of these parameters, is in my mind, a way to make standpoint theory far more robust than it is at the moment. Resilience and a strong sense of self aided by supportive educators and a supportive community can help Indigenous youths face adversity and see school as a place where each can flourish into a strong, self-determined human being.

Contribution to teaching

Teachers hold a special place in my heart. Not only because a select few left an indelible mark and shaped whom I have become, but additionally because I have lived life from that perspective and the perspective of someone reflecting on the development of pedagogical skills.

Besides a very few, I can say that most teachers have been kind and tremendously generous individuals in my own lived experience. In my mind, most educators are trying to do their best to help individuals flourish by sharing with each youngster the knowledge they feel would help each one succeed. I have intended to encourage non-Indigenous educators to consider Indigenous ways of knowing. I hope educators can see the value of curricula and curricular resources, such as those presented. As I see it, standpoint theory in an educational context is a theoretical framework that considers curricular choices that foster the resilience of Indigenous youths by decolonizing, empowering, and bridging the communication and negotiation between educators, school, and the community, and that reduces truancy by cultivating and being mindful of the essential context on the storied lives of Indigenous youths. Forming strong communication links where trust can be built between the players of education, including players in unequal settings, I hope, forms a bridge that would help non-Indigenous educators collaborate with elders, community members, or both, to craft relevant and meaningful learning experiences.

I also hope that my contribution to standpoint theory in the educational context I presented above is seen as an efficient tool that could potentially enable non-Indigenous educators to create better lines of communication and collaboration when examining curricula, so each educator can establish a sharper focus on why a shift is essential and how each could take on the challenge. I see it as an approach that could set the stage for confidence and engagement on all sides.

Value of Indigenous Paradigms

Indigenous community members have always been aware, or in some cases, are becoming mindful of the significance of Indigenous pedagogies. Over the years, myriad documents such as *Building a smokehouse: The geometry of prisms* (Kagle & University of

Alaska Fairbanks (2007), or *Bridging cultures: Scientific and indigenous ways of knowing nature (*Aikenhead & Michell, 2011), just to name a few, have been created in an effort to provide alternatives to traditional Western knowledge sources.

Educators, in general, need to consider the magnitude to which increasing educator awareness about Indigenous paradigms can reduce truancy levels not just for Indigenous youths but for all individuals. Standpoint theory solidified how feminism and Indigenous knowledge intricately connected the analysis, since, as Moreton-Robinson (2013) indicated, it drives us to "question the ability of patriarchal white knowledge production to make truth claims through an episteme that does not accept there are limits to knowing and the metaphysical traces that underpin its logic" (Moreton-Robinson, 2013, p. 344). I see the solidification in the choice of materials that speak the voices and values of peoples long silenced and in the selection of what is deemed worth learning. Such is the case in the framing of key experiences for language learning anchored in culture, as presented in the Dene Kede (1993), or in the lessons on the importance Inuit peoples attribute to the tradition of naming, as shown in Inuuqatigiit (1996). If we are to continue the current set-up, a paradigm shift could not only increase the number of Indigenous youths who complete school but moreover encourage the pursuit of advanced degrees, thus promoting more extensive Indigenous representation in sectors that impact us all. Indigenous representation can contribute to resilience building by creating role models that can inspire young Indigenous people.

Recommendations

With this work, I recommend researchers reflect on future curricula and curricular resources through “timikkut,” “tarnikkut,” “anersaakkullu” (Jessen Williamson, 2011), and the parameters of standpoint theory, resilience and truancy, as I have laid them out. As mentioned

earlier, my Taíno roots, my lived experiences, and my academic research have all led me to suggest a broader meaning of standpoint theory that is comprehensive of the role education plays. I propose standpoint theory in an educational context to be a theoretical framework that considers curricular choices that foster the resilience of Indigenous youths by decolonizing, empowering, and bridging the communication and negotiation between educators, school, and the community, and that reduces truancy by cultivating and being mindful of the essential context on the storied lives of Indigenous youngsters. I see the theory as one that demonstrates the objective of promoting the equitable application of Indigenous knowledge systems to generate a robust paradigm shift in the education of Indigenous youths.

In my mind, examining future curricula and curricular resources while considering whether or not they offer the potentials necessary, such as the ones I had addressed when I reviewed the Inuuqatigiit Curriculum (1996), the Dene Kede Teacher's Resource Manual (1993), Full Circle: First Nations, Métis, and Inuit Ways of Knowing (2012), We Learn Together (2016), and Four Directions Teachings (2012), is a necessary step toward creating a new representation of what education should encompass.

With this new representation in mind, I examined the curricula by trying to weave some key points that could be essential aspects for non-Indigenous educators to reflect on, based on the possible negotiations of how to address curricula and inclusive communication. The purpose of the questions below are two-fold: First, educators respectful of seeing 'truth' from multi-dimensional perspectives need to reflect on the questions; secondly, researchers could explore these questions to examine other future curricula and curricular resources for the purpose of building resilience through mindful consideration of family and cultural values. Furthermore, the questions can help reduce truancy by inviting educators to reflect on factors beyond the binary

constructs such as excused/unexcused absences or voluntary/involuntary absenteeism, outlined by Birioukov (2016) while using Indigenous paradigms. Questions such as those listed below, and parameters such as those presented in this work, could be an impetus for tangible, evidence-based change in curricula:

- What can I extract from this curriculum document to show peers and community members how I inspire my students in a culturally relevant manner?
- How does this curriculum help each Indigenous youth in my classes address their academic and personal challenges?
- What examples can I show from this curriculum of how I ensure the educational experience of each Indigenous youth in my class is a positive one that promotes resilience and makes each feel seen and respected?
- Have I considered and explored how the lessons I teach from this curriculum make my Indigenous students feel about their cultural heritage? Am I supporting them from a place of strength?
- How have the lessons I have taught from this curriculum impacted the feelings of each Indigenous youngster in my class about their heritage? Did I actively work to make each feel more connected to their heritage? Did I seek guidance through elders, community members, or resources whenever possible?
- Can I identify how this curriculum helped me assess each young Indigenous person equitably?
- Do I know why a particular student is truant? What actions do I take to ensure each individual attends? Have I sought help from parents, colleagues, and the community to reduce each truancy?

- What actions can I take to encourage my students to go into university or the workforce, to be champions for each of theirs culture and community, and what can I do to actively prevent the endorsement of full assimilation as a means to succeed?

Caguana as axiology tied into these broad experiences and the potential impact of encouraging teachers to incorporate Indigenous knowledge systems, thus fostering a sense of integrity and caring toward Indigenous youths. I investigated cultivating resilience by juxtaposing it with the work of Jessen Williamson (2011), which addressed the necessity of meeting the needs of the mind, body, soul and spirit in the learning process: "We would be told 'silattorsarit' – "expand your purview" – and we were to use these three elements to expand our intellect" (p. 62). The juxtaposition was done in the hope of expanding the findings on standpoint theory as presented by Medina-Minton (2018), Harding (2009), Moreton-Robinson (2013), Ardill (2013), and Foley (2003), to include the educational effects on resilience and truancy contingent on the curricular work educators employ in each classroom. The importance of teaching through the application of Indigenous curricula that aims to decolonize by holistically focusing on honouring the culture of each Indigenous youth, as they are/wherever they are, cannot be underestimated and drives my desire to broaden the meaning of standpoint theory to be inclusive of resilience and reduction of truancy when addressing educational contexts. Ideally, I envisioned that my research findings could be used prior to teachers coming into their first contact in the classrooms. Still, they could be equally valuable for more seasoned non-Indigenous educators.

Addressing the significance of culturally relevant pedagogy in considering the future community impact and involvement of Indigenous youths within their own communities, in setting to empower their own peoples and nationhood, which is implicitly constructed by the

curriculum designers in the curricular documents examined, and on a global scale, is critical. It would signal a methodical transition toward the inclusion of something beyond the binary system of Western educational practices. In considering the global scale, and our responsibilities as global citizens, the Gender Equality in the Arctic Phase III Report produced by the Arctic Council (2021) has conscientiously addressed considerations that need to be addressed to help drive tangible change:

> *Indigenous knowledge* is holistic in nature, connecting the individual with souls and spirits and is firmly grounded in Indigenous lands and languages. Knowledge is transferred through oral tradition from generation to generation. The unique, multi-faceted and deeply gender-based knowledge is poorly captured in the binary system and understanding of its value has been severely lacking among civil servants in the governing systems, even Indigenous government systems. (Jessen Williamson, p.175)

Exploring issues such as the above could unearth the challenges that hinder progress. Such information is the heart of how I envision my proposed expanded view of standpoint theory, revealing truths that could positively impact the lives of Indigenous peoples and Indigenous voices, and in the case of this research, in the field of education in connection to external factors that can impact school attendance and resilience.

Providing a robust platform for Indigenous voices is why I wove Guabancex as methodology, disrupting lessons non-Indigenous educators may have assumed, fostering the development of new lessons we can learn from pedagogy relevant to Indigenous culture and communities. Honouring the importance of community partnerships that are highly valued in Indigenous ways of knowing could additionally have the potential to be co-constructed with

community leaders and elders and applied by organizations supporting the well-being of Indigenous youngsters.

Conclusion

As I draw this labour of love to a close, I feel a sense of having come full circle. As a child, I was encouraged to follow my voice, as my family cheered, “Sing your songs! Show your pride!” I have now followed into my professional life, to voice the aspirations that will carry me onward into the future. Empowerment through decolonization is a long road. When I was growing up in Puerto Rico, there was no such framework in place, such as the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous People (UN General Assembly, 2007). Nowadays, policymakers deem it necessary. I feel an awareness of such frameworks earlier on would have given me more confidence as an educator, and I can only dream of how such a framework in place would have empowered me as a child. It was not until I began my studies at the University of Saskatchewan that I was exposed to Indigenous curricula and their potential for Indigenous youths. Empowerment through decolonization is not something I experienced too much as an educator in Greenland following the prescribed primarily Danish curricula. There is a growing drive to empower individuals with role models that reflect their own identity. Reflecting on my own childhood, it fills me with hope to see emerging role models such as the Puerto Rican genetics lecturer Semarhy Quiñones-Soto, who took it upon herself to develop a colouring book for children that shows what scientists look like in this day and age, so they are able to identify (Wight, 2021). One of the images features three Puerto Rican scientists with the scientist in the center wearing her vejigante mask (see Figure 5). A mask which

> in Puerto Rico, it took on a new dimension with the introduction of African and native Taíno cultural influence. The Africans supplied the drum-heavy music of *bomba y plena*, while the Taíno contributed native elements to the most crucial part of the

vejigante costume: the mask. As such, the Puerto Rico vejigante is a cultural expression singular to Puerto Rico. (Deane, 2018)

Figure 6.5

STEAM100x35 initiative to represent Puerto Rican women

Note. This image can inspire young Taínos to imagine a world of academia that values each youth holistically. The image message states "Logo artwork by Semarhy Quiñones-Soto, for the STEAM100x35 initiative to represent Puerto Rican women. Reprinted from "This Coloring Book Shows What A Scientist Really Looks Like" by Andrew Wight, 2021, *Forbes*. (https://www.forbes.com/sites/andrewwight/2021/01/19/this-coloring-book-shows-what-a-scientist-really-looks-like/?sh=18acb5aa156a).

As adults, learners become despondent in their communities, much stemming from enduring indignities attributed to Western systems that dictate education, health, and many other aspects of daily life. At its worst, these experiences can lead to suicide- an excruciating reality that has furthermore motivated my journey toward Indigenous paradigms after having lost two young students to suicide during the years I taught in Greenland. The incongruent cultural

expectations and the binary system that perpetuates colonizing and paternalistic practices have, in my mind, contributed to this tragedy and is a perspective supported by Jessen Williamson: "While non-Indigenous *suicides* are mostly related to individual suffering, suicides among Indigenous populations are to a greater extent considered a consequence of collective social suffering" (GEA III Report, 2021, p. 178). The inequitable circumstances drive my passion for emphasizing the Indigenous voice and the Indigenous perspective and is another reason I have been energized by my decolonizing effort toward broadening the meaning of standpoint theory to open communication lines addressing truancy reduction and resilience building. I hope to continue developing this passion to give back to Indigenous communities by creating future writings to encourage a paradigm shift in educators and to raise awareness through speaking engagements whenever possible.

Applying Kasibahagua to my work has birthed multiple possibilities for moving forward in education. I have moreover nurtured the importance of Sassuma Arnaa, who reminds us to look after what has been generously provided, lest it be taken away. As educators, we are privileged with a position of trust when we enter a classroom. A privilege that commands more than just acknowledgement of Indigenous ways of knowing; it is about treating Indigenous knowledge with the respect it is due. The benefits to be gained by shifting our minds and our spirit will impact Indigenous and non-Indigenous peoples alike in our shared communities. Reflecting on this analysis has been a rich self-journey of discovery that gives me hope for the future and the potential development, not just of new possibilities but likewise of a return home to the power and spirit alive in Indigenous ancestral knowledge. A spirit that lies at the foundation of the level of communication I hope I have conveyed in my work and to which I hope all educators aspire.

With the above and the incredible inner journey that I have done, I would humbly recommend the following for future research.

1. I recommend further exploration into how the triadic structure of "timikkut," "tarnikkut," and "anersaakkullu" (Jessen Williamson, 2011) could strengthen the meaning of standpoint theory and be applied to the prevention of truancy and resilience-building. I envision this in the educational context of collaborating with communities and Indigenous youths when planning lessons for each school year. In our capacity as educators, we are expected to meet many demands and expectations, but as I see it, none more important than connecting with our students, so each feels each one matters.
2. I recommend further exploration of the above mentioned in relation to exploring an innovative approach to preventing suicide among Indigenous youths. As part of my pending Ph.D. research, I can envision the rich potential of "timikkut," "tarnikkut," "anersaakkullu" (Jessen Williamson, 2011) to promote Indigenous knowledge systems to yield a paradigm shift of what knowledge is shared in schools that could help increase resilience and prevent suicide.
3. I recommend broadening the definition of standpoint theory to encompass an educational element that is inclusive of truancy reduction and resilience building as necessary components.
4. I recommend further exploration of Indigenous truancy in the context of curricula and binary systems versus the extent to which it is an issue when the application of Indigenous knowledge systems is in place.

Taíno daca (I am Taíno). *Seneko kakona* (many blessings to you).

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Appendix

UNIVERSITY OF SASKATCHEWAN

To:	Karla Jessen Williamson
Student:	Melina L Kristensen
Date:	26 February 2021
RE:	Beh ID 2550

Thank you for submitting your project entitled: "*Kasibahagua meets Sassuma Arnaa: An analysis of First Nations and Inuit curricula and curricular resources for the purpose of teacher education aimed at the reducing truancy and resilience-building among Indigenous youth*". This project meets the requirements for exemption status as per **Article 2.2 of the Tri-Council Policy Statement: Ethical Conduct for Research Involving Humans – TCPS 2 (2018)**, which states "Research does not require REB review when it relies exclusively on information that is:

a. publicly available through a mechanism set out by legislation or regulation and that is protected by law; or
b. in the public domain and the individuals to whom the information refers have no reasonable expectation of privacy."

It should be noted that though your project is exempt of ethics review, your project should be conducted in an ethical manner (i.e. in accordance with the information that you submitted). It should also be noted that any deviation from the original methodology and/or research question should be brought to the attention of the Behavioural Research Ethics Board for further review.

Digitally Approved by Vivian Ramsden, Vice Chair
Behavioural Research Ethics Board
University of Saskatchewan